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A STUDY OF THE WORKS OF PHILIP MEADOWS TAYLOR
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Philip Meadows Taylor Portrait from
Dublin University Magazine, April 1841.

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the works of Philip Meadows Taylor, nineteenth-century British administrator and author of six novels on Indian themes. His works, published between 1839 and 1878, belong to the little researched early period of Anglo-Indian literature when popular fiction reflected the confidence and beliefs of British rule in India.

Meadows Taylor worked in India as a political agent in various parts of Hyderabad from 1824 until his early retirement in 1860. His work, his close friendships with Indians, and his marriage to an Eurasian woman exposed him to various aspects of Indian life closed to many of his British contemporaries in India. This is reflected in his novels, of which the best known is his first, Confessions of a Thug, published in 1839. Subsequent works include Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War (1841), Tara (1863), Ralph Darnell (1865), Seeta (1873), and A Noble Queen (1878). All these works present Indian scenery and Indian customs vividly and sympathetically, and are characterised by unusually liberal views on such things as interracial marriage, race relations and Indian religious practices; views at odds with those of many of his contemporaries.

This thesis examines Meadows Taylor's works, and the connection between his portrayal of British conceptions of India and its people and the historical development of British rule in India. Ultimately Taylor's works illustrate his view that underneath the surface differences of race and religious creed lies a common human experience shared by both East and West, a view which differentiates him from other nineteenth-century writers on India. Other unusual thematic concerns include his use of Victorian concepts of domesticity in Indian settings, his presentation of strongly idealised Indian characters, and his frequent use as subject matter of "pre-colonial" Indian history.

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NOTE ON THESIS TEXT

"Anglo-Indian" is used to indicate the British community in India. The term's meaning was changed in 1916 to refer to people previously known as Eurasian, but it continued to be used in its former capacity by many writing on India and the area now known as Pakistan, until their independence from Britain in 1947. The term "native" is only used to indicate someone who is the opposite of a foreigner, i.e., someone indigenous to the country.

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PREFACE

In the works of modern critics, British literature dealing with the Raj has often appeared to be a branch of Kipling studies, the writers of the period before and after the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries being classified as pre-Kipling or post-Kipling. Some extensive commentary has been made on the latter period, but little has been written on the period before the 1880's. As a result, the most prominent Anglo-Indian author to emerge from this period has often been overlooked in favour of his better known successors. I refer to Philip Meadows Taylor, whose six novels on Indian themes were published between 1839 and 1878.

Born in Liverpool in 1808, Philip Meadows Taylor went to India in 1824 and worked as a political agent in various parts of Hyderabad until his early retirement in 1860. As an agent independent of the formal Indian service, Meadows Taylor was exposed to various aspects of Indian life closed to many of his British contemporaries in India. His work, his close friendship with Indians, and his marriage to an Eurasian woman allowed him insights into Indian customs and behaviour which he later used with great effect in his works.

Meadows Taylor is best known for his first novel, Confessions of a Thug (1839). This book, and Taylor's next work, the historical romance Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War (1841), were very popular and established him as an Anglo-Indian writer of note. They dealt with colourful and notorious Indian characters, events and

phenomena which appealed to his readers and earned him the soubriquet "the Scott of India". After 1841 Meadows Taylor did not return to writing fiction until his retirement in 1860. Between 1863 and 1873 he produced a trilogy of historical romances (Tara: A Mahratta Tale (1863), Ralph Darnell (1865), Seeta (1873)), of which Tara (1863) was the best received critically. Further works appeared after his death in 1876: his autobiography was published in 1877, and his last novel, A Noble Queen, was published in 1878.

Edward Said argues that most Western authors who deal with the Orient can be classified as belonging to the process which seeks to dominate and restructure the Orient according to Western conceptions. This process, he explains, "can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient -dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it."¹ With this in mind, it is tempting to categorise Taylor's works as merely part of the typical "Occidental" response to "Oriental" phenomena.

But Taylor's unusual subject matter and themes suggest a more complex reading is necessary in dealing with his presentation of India. Meadows Taylor's vivid descriptions of Indian scenery and of Indian customs are what most distinguish his works from those of his contemporaries, who were prone to exaggerated and romantic notions of India and its inhabitants. And while Meadows Taylor often falls prey to the plot conventions and stereotyped characterisations of the historical romance genre, his views on such things as interracial marriage, race relations, Indian religious practices, and in particular his view that underneath the surface differences of race

and religious creed lies a common human experience shared by both West and East, are at odds with those of many of his contemporaries. Taylor's attempts to look beyond the standard representations of India to present positive and sympathetic images of Indian history and culture, mark him as standing apart from those writers who, in the words of one academic, "often aggressively asserted their knowledge of the country and their familiarity with its peoples and cultures."²

It is time that Taylor's works are recognised for their unique and distinctive representations of the Indian subcontinent and its people. As one recent critic has perceptively noted, Taylor "was not only quite exceptional in his insight into the ways of thinking of those he met and whom he embodied in his novels, but their dialogue, the descriptions of everything from weddings to meals, his own language (his letters are replete with Anglicised Indianisms),...suggest how much he took on the character of those he depicted."³

Notes

1. Edward Said, Orientalism, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987, 3.
2. Robin Jared Lewis, "The Literature of the Raj", in Asia in Western Fiction, Robin Winks and James Rush, eds., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990, 54.
3. Dennis Walder, intro. to reprint of Taylor, The Story of My Life, London: Pluto Press, 1989, xix.

1. INTRODUCTION

Philip Meadows Taylor is one of the most remarkable and underrated men to emerge from the British Raj in the nineteenth century. Arriving in India in 1824 as a callow youth of 16 with little formal education and little knowledge of the country, Taylor spent the next thirty-six years living and working in and learning about India in isolated posts in the central part of the country. His administrative accomplishments were many, and the confidence of his superiors in his judgment and talent was demonstrated during the Indian uprising of 1857, when he was expected to keep the Berar district quiet solely by "moral strength", for no help was available from the military forces trying to cope with the unrest near his district. That he was able to do so says much for his personal qualities and the respect he held among those he administered. This respect derived not only from Taylor's enthusiasm for his work, but also from his interest in and understanding of Indian life and culture. His isolation from the typical station life of his civilian contemporaries, due to his status as an unconvenanted servant, or subordinate member of the Indian civil service, enabled him to develop an intensely personal understanding of India and its people. His natural affinity for learning manifested itself in the remarkable scope of his activities and interests. He learned Persian, Hindustani and several Indian dialects, taught himself surveying, sketching and painting, researched and presented papers and lectures

on Indian archeology, architecture, literature and music, and designed and built buildings, boats, roads, dams, and reservoirs.

Taylor's interest in India also informed his literary efforts, and he is remembered today, if at all, as the author of the first novel to depict Thuggism, Confessions of a Thug, published in 1839. Without doubt Taylor's isolation from Anglo-Indian society enabled him to gain a less distorted view than many of Indian culture, and he wrote his novels on India with the aim of passing onto the British public his understanding of Indian customs and beliefs. The reading public, however, were not interested in reading his idealised versions of India and its people, and the publication of the more accessible Anglo-Indian tales of Rudyard Kipling, who concentrated more on detailing the British way of life in India, ensured the eclipse of Taylor's works by the end of the nineteenth century.

Philip Meadows Taylor was born in Slater Street, Liverpool on 25 September, 1808, the eldest of five sons. Taylor's family had distinguished literary and social connections: through his father, Taylor was directly descended from John Taylor of Norwich, the Dissenting divine, and was related to such important nineteenth-century social figures as Henry Reeve, Sarah Austin and Lady Duff Gordon, while through his mother, Jane Honoria Mitford, Taylor was indirectly related to Mary Russell Mitford, author of Our Village, William Mitford, eighteenth-century historian, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and John Freeman Mitford, the first Baron Redesdale. Such family ties proved useful to Taylor later in life when he began his literary career. Taylor's early years, though, were difficult ones. His father's business affairs were often "involved", necessitating

several moves to smaller and smaller homes as financial difficulties increased. The frequent moves also meant frequent changes in schools. Taylor claims he learned little in this time, except for "the rudiments of English and the earliest lessons in Latin,"¹ and spelling, "which was well knocked into me."² Eventually the family moved to Dublin, where Taylor's father became executive manager of a large brewery in James Street. Here Taylor was enrolled in Dr. Hutton's day school, where again he was subject to severe discipline: "Was everything I learned always to be beaten into me?" he exclaimed while describing this period in his autobiography.³ Taylor's interest in music and drawing first manifested itself at this time, but proper tuition in such accomplishments was denied him, for "in those days it was considered effeminate to teach boys to draw, or sing, or play on any instrument."⁴ This did not seem to prevent other members of his family from taking up such activities. One of Taylor's younger brothers, Isaac Weld Taylor, became a well known lithographer, which indicates that other factors, such as family finances and Taylor's status as eldest son, may have had something to do with the discouragement he met.

Around the middle of 1823 family circumstances forced Taylor to be removed from school and indentured as a clerk to Messrs Yates Brothers & Co, West India merchants operating out of Liverpool. It was a difficult period for him. Suffering from ill health and undergoing petty abuse from fellow workers, Taylor remained in his position until early 1824, when he was released by the firm from his indenture. Shortly afterwards Taylor's father, who had by then moved to Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire, made the acquaintance of a Mr.

Baxter, a Bombay merchant, who agreed to take on Taylor as an assistant in his Bombay house. Mr. Baxter's "splendid" lifestyle in England impressed Taylor's family, and it was with high prospects that Meadows Taylor left Greenwich on the Upton Castle on 15 April 1824, fully confident that he would soon return rich and prosperous as a partner in Baxter's house. He would turn sixteen within a month of arrival in India.

Mr Baxter's "great house" proved to be a small retail shop on the verge of bankruptcy, but through Taylor's contact with his mother's cousin William Newnham, then Chief Secretary to the Bombay Government, he was able to find alternative employment. Mr. Newnham, through the help of Sir Charles Metcalfe, then Resident at Hyderabad, arranged a commission for Taylor in the Nizam of Hyderabad's army. It was an unlikely transition but, on 5 December 1824, Taylor, now Lieutenant in the 6th Infantry of the Nizam's Service, arrived in Aurangabad to join his regiment.

The eighteenth century had seen the fragmentation and decline of the Moghul Empire and a corresponding increase in British power and dominance in India. Individual struggles to control power in, and to command the treasury of, sections of this fragmenting empire were common and indeed were one of the main reasons the British were able to consolidate power in India with such ease. Ambitious princes would seek British aid in their eagerness to topple rivals standing in their way, or to protect their fiefdoms from attack by equally ambitious enemies. The British, eager to safeguard and expand their dominance in trade, were not hesitant in their help. Ultimately the

price for such aid included trading concessions, yearly payments of large tributes, or certain rights to indirect control of the states.⁵

Hyderabad was one of the principal independent Indian states which came in this way to be indirectly controlled by the British. The British presence in Hyderabad was a result of eighteenth-century alliances and treaties initially made to counter the increasing power and encroachment in the Deccan of the French and of the Mysorean ruler Tipu Sultan. The four Mysorean wars, waged against Tipu Sultan between 1767 and 1799 by the British and the Hyderabad and Marathan states and, prior to 1782, against Tipu's father Haidar Ali, resulted in a "subsidiary treaty" between the East India Company and Hyderabad. This agreement offered British security to the state by providing for the establishment of a special Hyderabad military contingent, separate from official Company control but officered by British men and funded by the Nizam. A British Resident was established in the court and British administrators were used to organize and run the territories acquired by the Nizam in the wars against Tipu Sultan, and subsequently ceded to the British in 1800 to cover the Nizam's military costs.

The British Resident advised the ruler and supervised the British officers employed in the Nizam's administration. The system through which British officers directed the Nizam's army became fully developed after a reorganization of the original ill-kept forces by Henry Russell, Resident at Hyderabad from 1811 to 1820. The army was officered by East India Company military men and by independent recruits appointed by the resident. It was as one of the latter that Meadows Taylor began his career in India.⁶

Taylor's informal status caused him much trouble throughout his career: as an uncovenanted member attached to neither the East India Company's military nor its civil service, his pay and position were often lower and more restricted than those of his covenanted fellow officers. His position was less secure and more dependent on the fluctuations in British relations with the Nizam, and benefits such as extended furloughs to Britain were generally unavailable to Taylor: his first furlough, in 1838, was granted only through the special intervention of Lord William Bentinck, then Governor-General of India.

Nevertheless Taylor enjoyed his new life in the Nizam's army, spending his free time hunting, shooting, riding and associating with the other members of the regiment, among whom was James Outram. He also began learning Persian and Hindustani, and by the middle of 1825 was sufficiently fluent in them to be directed to superintend, record and act as interpreter in regimental court-martial proceedings. His dedication and hard work soon led to more challenging administrative postings under the patronage of William B. Martin, resident of Hyderabad from 1825 to 1830. Between 1826 and 1829 he held such posts as Superintendent of Bazaars at Bolarum and Assistant Superintendent of Police in certain western districts of India.

As Taylor's confidence and interest in his work grew, his personal qualities and talent as an administrator emerged. Several episodes in his autobiography demonstrate Taylor's singular strength of character and his skill in judging character. One such incident, often quoted as an example of his sense of humour, occurred while Taylor was Superintendent of Bazaars. Reports came in of corrupt

flour-sellers in Tuljapur, who were short-changing their customers by adulterating their flour with sand to the point of inedibility. After investigating the matter, Taylor called the sellers together, asked them to weigh out two pounds of their flour, and then ordered them to eat it themselves. In response to their objections he replied, having apparently much difficulty keeping his countenance, "[Y]ou have made many eat your flour, why should you object to eat it yourselves?"⁷ The subsequent ridicule and loss of face over this episode ensured that the flour-sellers had been taught a lesson. A later incident also indicates Taylor's confident style of work. While assigned to police duty, Taylor had to effect the arrest of a noted brigand, Narrayan Rao, whose stronghold was fiercely guarded by "a strong garrison of desperadoes."⁸ Accompanied by a detachment of only nine men, Taylor arrived at Rao's village and demanded to see the man. On being approached by the brigand, Taylor boldly seized him in full view of his men and marched him out without hesitation at spear point. Such audacity must have stunned the onlookers, for it wasn't until the small group was well clear of the village gate that they reacted and began shooting. By then, however, it was too late, and Taylor and his group made off without injury.

The increasing responsibility of Taylor's work dampened his initial enthusiasm for the high-spirited company of fellow officers. Taylor's association with, and close observation of Indians and their customs drew out the best in him, and he soon tired of the more conventional amusements of his British contemporaries. "I did not enter much into general society at this period," he records, because "high play was the chief amusement which prevailed, and I never was

at that time or at any time fond of cards, [n]or did I ever play for money, except for the veriest trifle."⁹ Taylor seemed especially sensitive to the need to seek mental stimulation outside the mundane cycle of administrative work, and he made much effort to broaden his knowledge in as many areas as he could, including painting, music, and Indian languages and architecture. He relished intellectual contact with people, whether it was through meeting Muslim gentlemen on the main thoroughfares in the evening, and being asked "to sit down with them while their carpets were spread, and their attendants brought hookahs," or through attending evening gatherings at William Palmer's house, where the elite of Hyderabad society often mingled.¹⁰

William Palmer, whose father, General William Palmer, had served first as military secretary to Warren Hastings and later as Resident at Hyderabad, was for fourteen years in the military service of the Nizam of Hyderabad, after which he turned to banking, founding his own company in 1810. His financial activity brought him into contact with both Indian and European high social circles, and he had extensive dealings with the Nizam. It is fair to assume that, as a result, "Palmer was a centre of intrigue both in the city of Hyderabad and in the circles that surrounded the Residency."¹¹

Taylor does not mention in his autobiography how or when he first met William Palmer, but it is evident that Palmer was an enormous influence in Taylor's life, advising him on his work, encouraging him in his writings, and serving, rather detrimentally, as Taylor's financial advisor. Meadows Taylor does state that he made numerous visits to Palmer's house between 1825 and 1829 where he met those he regarded as "the most intelligent members of Hyderabad society, both

native and European."¹² Presumably he also met frequently with Palmer's charming Eurasian daughter Mary, whom a rather caustic contemporary, M.E. Bagnold, described in 1843 as "the little Indian queen."¹³ Taylor himself makes few substantial comments about her in his autobiography; he refers only briefly to such things as Mary's frequent illnesses, and the dates of their marriage (1832) and of Mary's death (1844).

A word here should be said about Mary's unusual family background, which provides us with important clues to understanding Taylor's use of and partiality to the highly idealized Indian heroines of his novels. Although we know very little of Mary Palmer, it is certain that Mary's grandmother was an Indian princess, a member of the ruling family of Oudh. She became the second wife of General William Palmer, and after his death in 1816 she remained in the household of her son William, the financier, until her death in 1828. Meadows Taylor refers to her in his autobiography as the "grand-looking old mother, the Begum Sahib," and describes how, on his departure to administer a district in the south-west of India, she "blessed me, and tied a rupee in a silk handkerchief round my arm, praying the saints to have me in their holy keeping."¹⁴ This is the only note on Mary's maternal family that can be found in Taylor's writings and letters.

The identity of Mary's mother is an interesting but difficult matter. Sir Patrick Cadell, in his introduction to The Letters of Philip Meadows Taylor to Henry Reeve, states that the younger William Palmer married a European widow in 1848, at the age of sixty-eight. She is described by Reeve's source as William's third wife, but it is

the only marriage that is recorded, "and the number and ages of his children show that he had many irregular connexions, while, in those cases in which the names of the mothers of the children were recorded, they are either Moslem or Hindu."¹⁵ Clearly Mary was at least partly of Indian descent, yet her background did not stop Meadows Taylor from marrying her in 1832, nor did it affect his deep feelings for her. In a memoir published in 1886, his cousin insists that Taylor's love for Mary proved so strong that he forwent a dowry in order to marry her. Following Taylor's engagement to Mary, William Palmer's banking house had "collapsed in the most honourable manner," as one commentator noted, due to problems in seeking to reclaim outstanding debts owed by the Nizam of Hyderabad.¹⁶ This caused a momentary hitch in Taylor's marriage plans, as his cousin relates:

Mr. Palmer told Colonel Taylor he had his full permission to relinquish the marriage now that his daughter was portionless. My true-hearted cousin refused to sacrifice his love, and the marriage took place.¹⁷

In one of the more emotional passages of Meadows Taylor's autobiography, written a full thirty years after Mary's death in 1844, he writes of the "open wound" he felt after she died, which reopened each time he returned to the house he had built especially for Mary and himself. No doubt Taylor is being dramatic and nostalgic in his old age, but the feeling behind the statement seems real. We can assume that their relationship had been a particularly strong and loving one, strong enough to provoke this comment from Taylor:

I determined then, however, to live out my life alone, and that I would never seek marriage with another; and I have

kept faith to her who is gone and to myself, and shall do so
till I die.¹⁸

In spite of these statements concerning his private life some critics have asserted that Meadows Taylor kept up a harem during his stay in India. This assumption is supposedly based on observation but perhaps is based on a belief that his writings suggest a too-ready sympathy for Indian culture. His views seem more akin to those of the "nabobs" of an earlier period than of the more self-conscious and moralistic average Anglo-Indian Victorian of the late nineteenth century. The rumours which circulated about him are detailed in Dennis Kincaid's British Social Life in India, 1608-1937. After describing Meadows Taylor's "well-stocked harem" and his visits to England, Kincaid writes:

But he was happy to be back again in his kingdom, surrounded by his subjects and his girls, all rivals for his favour. When my grandfather stayed with him the old gentleman was particularly satisfied with the newest recruit to his household, a fifteen-year-old Maratha girl who was uncommonly skilful at "mulling" his eyebrows.¹⁹

What are we to make of this secondhand account, which conjures up visions of women kneading Meadows Taylor's weary eyebrows after a hard day's work mingling with the local ryots? Sir Philip Cadell goes to great lengths to show how cavalier Kincaid is with his facts, mentioning how Kincaid confuses Taylor's district, Shorapur, with Sholapur, and how Kincaid's descriptions of Meadows Taylor's many visits to England are in fact false, as Meadows Taylor went back to Europe only once in the entire time he worked in India. The whole matter may seem a trivial point now, in a time when opinions on such issues are on the whole more liberal. But in this case it is difficult to trust a secondary source that gets basic facts wrong,

and Kincaid's insinuations seem suspect. They are at odds, for example, with Meadows Taylor's own professions on the subject. In a very frank letter to his second cousin, Henry Reeve, written in 1847, Meadows Taylor responds to Henry's query about his private habits:

No, I have no zenana. Carry and you are wrong, and I am glad of it. I have had a struggle with myself about it, but have hitherto kept free and hope to do so. I say I have had a struggle and you may believe it for here chastity in women is, I hear, rare, and I had offers enow. They have ceased now, being refused, and the women, I believe, feel I am not to be tempted. ²⁰

This strong statement, however, reflects only part of Taylor's thoughts at the time. In a letter written to Henry Reeve in 1847, Taylor expresses emotions similar to those found later in his autobiography (see quote above), but with a difference :

Verily and truly I am alone. Nor will I marry in India. I desire to come home and settle among you and if I be too old then to marry, I will remain as I am. ²¹

It is clear that in 1847 Meadows Taylor still entertained hopes of finding a wife after his retirement, and was not as quick to devote himself to his wife's memory as he suggests in his autobiography. Whether he would have considered marrying an Indian woman we will never know.

In 1829 the Nizam Shikander Jah died, and was succeeded by his eldest son Nazir-ud-Dowlah. He and the Chief Minister, Chandu Lal, then demanded the withdrawal of the British from the Hyderabad territory. The Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, in acceding to the demand, proposed the withdrawal of all English officers in the Nizam's civil administration, and the abolition of the Nizam Contingent in return for the payment of the very substantial sum of twenty lakhs of rupees. The Nizam agreed to the former decision but

balked at the price for abolishing the Contingent; no doubt the Nizam had noted the benefits and lower expense involved in retaining an independent force to safeguard his territorial security.

In any case opportunities for civil administrative duties were now curtailed for Taylor, and he returned to service in his regiment, the 6th Infantry of the Nizam's Service, at Aurangabad, in 1830, remaining there until 1837 and gaining the rank of Captain in 1835. Upon his return from furlough in 1841, the change to the situation concerning civil posts for European officers having been revoked, he was appointed Political Agent at Shorapur, then "a feudatory state under the suzerainty of the Nizam's Government."²² As Political Agent he was in the unusual position of being responsible for maintaining order and for preparing the young Rajah (aged seven when Meadows Taylor first arrived at Shorapur) for his eventual succession to power. During his twelve years as Political Agent, Meadows Taylor observed (and claimed to help deter) a power struggle between the Rajah's mother, the Ranee Ishwarama, and her brother-in-law Pid Naik, regent until the Rajah's accession in 1853. The insights Meadows Taylor gained into such political jostling in Indian states certainly allowed him to detail similar events more authentically in his novels Tara and Seeta. He himself claimed, referring to Tara, that "my long residence in an entirely native State, and my intimate acquaintance with the people, their manners, habits, and social organization, gave me opportunities, which I think few Englishmen have ever enjoyed, of roughly understanding native life."²³

Following his residency at Shorapur, which ended shortly after the Rajah came of age and succeeded to power, Meadows Taylor was selected

as Deputy-Commissioner of a territory near the Bombay residency temporarily ceded by the Nizam. This position arose from a further negotiated settlement between the British authorities and the Nizam, which caused much discussion at the time of its implementation in 1853. The Nizam's government, suffering from mismanagement and internal conflicts, had reached a point where it could no longer provide funds for the maintenance of the Nizam Contingency. Cession of territory to the British seemed the only solution, one which Meadows Taylor, among others, had advocated a few years earlier, and the districts of Berar, Nuldrug and Raichore were given over to British administration. Taylor was assigned to administer the Nuldrug district, which he did until 1857, when he was ordered to hold North Berar during the upheaval of that year.²⁴ In 1858 Meadows Taylor returned to Shorapur, which he administered until his early retirement due to ill health in 1860. He spent the next fifteen years writing in Dublin, only returning to India for a short visit on the invitation of the Hyderabad minister Salar Jung, in 1875. He died, and was buried, in Mentone on the voyage home on 13 May 1876.

II

In 1833 Taylor had an article on Thuggism published in the New Monthly Magazine. The interest this article generated led Meadows Taylor to write his first book, Confessions of a Thug. The editor of New Monthly Magazine at the time of the publication of the Thug article, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, suggested that Taylor try writing a novel on Thuggism, and in 1835 Taylor began work on it. The novel

was inspired by an early encounter with a former Thug, whom Taylor mentions briefly in a footnote to his article. Estimating the number of deaths caused yearly by Thugs, Taylor noted:

Ameer Ali, an approver and noted Thug, now at this place, declares and glories in having been present at the murder of 719 persons, whose property is estimated at two lacs and a half of rupees!²⁵

Thuggism had attracted Taylor's attention long before the subject became well known through Colonel William Sleeman's efforts in the 1830s. Taylor claims in his autobiography to have been aware of Thuggee activities during his time as Assistant Superintendent of Police in the Southwest district of India between 1826 and 1829. Towards the end of his tenure, Taylor began investigating discoveries of recently dug graves which held victims of stranglings, and these led him to query the hasty passage through his district of parties of Indian Muslims purportedly selling various trinkets and goods. In the middle of his enquiries Taylor was ordered to rejoin his regiment at Hingolee, causing him to comment that, had he been allowed to stay, "I should have been the first to disclose the horrible crime of Thuggee to the world; but it fell to the good fortune of Major Sleeman to do so afterwards."²⁶ His investigations, although unfulfilled, fired his imagination and for a time, Taylor claims, the subject haunted him. "Why," Taylor mused, "should so many men follow the same calling? Where did they go? Were they speaking truth?"²⁷ Such questions recurred in 1833 when Taylor interrogated several suspected Thugs in his district denounced by approvers captured by Sleeman:

Day after day I recorded tales of murder, which, though horribly monotonous, possessed an intense interest; and as

fast as new approvers came in, new mysteries were unravelled and new crimes confessed.²⁸

Taylor now felt vindicated in his earlier suspicions of the presence of Thuggee activities in his area; but he could not help expressing some resentment of Sleeman, exclaiming that he felt "sore that it had not fallen to my lot to win the fame of the affair."²⁹ Taylor was, however, to win fame instead for his depiction of the exploits of the Thug Ameer Ali.

Taylor finished writing Confessions of a Thug before sailing on leave for England in 1838. Stopping at Malta along the way, Taylor had his cousin, Mrs. Sarah Austin, read through the manuscript. Getting the manuscript to her through Maltese customs and quarantine restrictions proved a difficult matter, as Taylor relates:

She was about to start for England, and asked me to give her my MS. to look over on her journey. I did so; but the three volumes were first scored through with knives, then smoked with sulphur till the ink turned pale, and finally delivered to her, by means of a pair of long tongs, through a narrow slit in the grating!³⁰

Through Mrs Austin's help, Taylor had the book published, after much cutting and revising, by Richard Bentley in 1839. Taylor proudly reported that the interest in his book was high enough to include even the Queen, who his publishers reported "had directed sheets, as they were revised, to be sent to her -and, having become interested in the work, wished for further supplies as soon as possible."³¹

Confessions of a Thug was an immediate success on publication, going through two editions in four months. It was still being reprinted and selling well at the turn of the century. Between 1887 and 1897 Kegan, Paul, Trench & Trubner reprinted it four times and sold over 5000 copies as part of their Colonial Series. Its early

success prompted Richard Bentley to commission another novel from Taylor on eighteenth-century British clashes with the Mysorean prince Tipu Sultan, purposely producing what was, in essence, a sequel to an earlier novel on the same subject by Sir Walter Scott. The result, Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War, proved equally successful although not as lasting in appeal as Taylor's first work. These early works all dealt with colourful and notorious Indian characters, events and phenomena, and were combined with Meadows Taylor's first hand knowledge and description of Indian landscape and characters. At their best they recalled the style of the historical romances of Walter Scott, and for this reason Taylor was dubbed by many "the Scott of India".

In November 1840 Meadows Taylor returned to India after a three year furlough. His time in Britain had been pleasant and profitable from a social and literary standpoint. He had spent his time at home giving lectures, writing Tippoo Sultaun and a ninety page article on India, and attending parties where he met many major literary and political figures of the time. It is not surprising that Taylor left Britain with mixed feelings about his future in India. "How was I to go on?" he recalls in his autobiography,

Was I to rejoin my regiment, and continue its dull routine of duties, or was a fresh career before me? My mind was filled with speculations on these and many other points.³²

Shortly after his arrival in India, Meadows Taylor began work on a new novel based on an idea he had worked out in Britain. While visiting relatives in Scotland in 1839, Meadows Taylor met with Professor John Wilson, then one of the most important editors and contributors of Blackwood's Magazine. Wilson encouraged him to start

work on a possible series of works based on key events in Indian history. Taylor gave it some thought and after his return to India reported in a letter to Henry Reeve, a cousin and close friend, dated 24th August 1841, that he had begun "a Tale of the time of Sivajee (sic) the founder of the Mahratta power."³³ This was to become the novel Tara, set in 1657. In late September he was still working on it, although his initial enthusiasm had been dampened by his administrative activities and by the weather. "My book progresses slowly," he wrote on 26 September, "but progresses; one cannot write in such mugginess as we have had with any comfort."³⁴ Shortly afterwards Taylor abandoned the work. He was not to return to it until after his retirement in 1860.

In his autobiography, Taylor describes how he restarted work on the novel. With the help as amanuensis of Mrs. Cashel Hoey, at the time a popular and prolific writer of novels and reviews, he set out to sketch the entire plot in one afternoon:

We went together to my study, and locked the door, and there for six hours we worked at it, she writing in total silence, and a perfect sketch of the whole tale was made, the details of which were filled up afterwards.³⁵

After this bold start, Meadows Taylor was soon able to complete the work and begin the search for a publisher.

Because of the interest initially shown by Blackwood and Sons in his work, Meadows Taylor approached them in early 1862 about the possibility of publication. Identifying himself as the author of Confessions of a Thug, Meadows Taylor enquired whether it would suit them "to publish a work of fiction, the scene of which is in India, & illustrative of Native manners and customs -in your magazine."³⁶

Receiving no reply to this enquiry, he then approached Richard Bentley, publisher of his earlier works. Mr. Bentley sent the work to be reviewed by one of his main readers, Geraldine Jewsbury who, although finding the material handed in well written, felt there would be insufficient interest in its foreign and unusual content among the reading public to justify publishing it. "I do not think you could find a sufficient public to read or feel an interest in a story that turns mainly on the complications of native Indian intrigues amongst themselves," she wrote in a letter to Mr Bentley on 26 January 1863.³⁷ Her final comments echoed later criticisms of the work:

The interest turns on half barbarous political intrigues touched up by a little love and abduction like an old border raid, but the interest is not strong enough nor the scenes vivid nor sufficiently exciting to overcome the indolence of general readers who, when they read a novel cannot be troubled to learn strange hard names and strange intricate geography.³⁸

Geraldine Jewsbury ended her note by warning Mr. Bentley, "It would not pay you to take the book so don't do it."³⁹ Despite this, Mr. Bentley offered Taylor £300 for a first edition of 1250 copies, and a similar amount for any subsequent editions. Taylor was not satisfied with this and turned once more to Blackwood in March 1863, when the work was almost completed, in hopes of a better offer. This time Meadows Taylor stressed the novelty of his work and his peculiar knowledge of India. He even claimed to be the only writer working in this area:

There is no European element whatsoever in the story which, like a former work by me Confessions of a Thug, belongs to the people of India Hindus and Mahomedans only -my life has been almost exclusively passed among them since that book was written, but perhaps without matured experience, and during this period, no one, that I am aware of, has ventured

into the field which was then exclusively my own. (BP, MS. 4186, f. 90)

The head of the firm, John Blackwood, replied in a lukewarm manner, and Meadows Taylor must have felt rather disheartened by the first line of his note, which expressed reservations similar to those in Geraldine Jewsbury's appraisal of Tara:

We fear that your Indian novel without any European element will be almost too strange in its materials to prove interesting to the general reader for a series of parts in our magazine. (BP, Acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 370)

Mr. Blackwood did, however, express an interest in reading the manuscript, and Meadows Taylor promptly sent him the first volume.

On perusing this, John Blackwood was less than entirely convinced of its future success, even though he admired the style. For him the main obstacle was still its unfamiliar content. As he wrote back to Meadows Taylor on May 2, 1863, "The descriptions are good & the incidents striking & vividly told but I fear that there is for the English reader a fatal want of human interest about the characters." (BP, Acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 383) Taylor responded quickly, suggesting the work was not as alien as Mr. Blackwood supposed. "I cannot," he wrote, "it is true, invest the Tale with modern interest -but I think my people would be found at least human: not very unlike ourselves perhaps in display of passions, and yet sufficiently strange from differences of creed and race, to admit of a new phase of illustrative fiction." (BP, MS. 4186, f. 100) This notion was to be one of Meadows Taylor's main arguments in favour of publication throughout his long correspondence with Blackwood. What it suggests is that Taylor hoped to use his novels as an illustration of his own views on India's distinctiveness and thus as a means of educating

people about India and its customs. "Are Indian subjects to be tabooed?" he asks, and further observes:

I think and find that people at home want familiar knowledge of the natives and the country and that learned essays delightful though they may be as Mr. Patersons, can only be endured by one class of students -I find people here entertained by familiar matters about India in the simple lectures I occasionally give here as an amateur, and the reason why the shoemakers son could not propose to the carpenters daughter, though involving the highest principles of caste discussion, seemed to be perfectly intelligible even to my lady auditors. (BP, MS. 4186, f. 101)

Whether Taylor's argument convinced him or, more probably, whether the clear and strong writing in the novel impressed John Blackwood, he was persuaded ultimately to undertake the publication of Tara. In late May of 1863, after two months of discussion, Blackwood's made Taylor an offer of £300 for an edition of 1000 copies and an extra £50 upon the edition being sold out, and £200 for every 500 copies printed and sold subsequent to this. This being a better offer than Richard Bentley's, Meadows Taylor accepted it and Tara was published by Blackwood's in October 1863.

The work was a critical success but sold moderately: by late January 1864 750 copies had been bought, but soon after Taylor received a note from John Blackwood, once again voicing his conviction that the alienness of the material had hampered public reception of the work. "It is a very small sale from a book that has been so well received," he wrote, "but the names or the utter unacquaintance of the public with the whole subject were a barrier to anything like general popularity." (BP, Acc. 5643, D5, p. 68) Having said this, and having anticipated perhaps being "left in the lurch with only a sale of a few hundreds," John Blackwood expressed himself well pleased that it had sold as well as it did. (ibid) Soon

afterwards, in fact, he helped negotiate a Tauchnitz edition of Tara, which was published in 1864, for which Meadows Taylor received £25. (Tara was subsequently reprinted by other publishers in 1874, 1881, 1884, and 1888, which merely proved its durability and continuing, if somewhat low keyed, appeal.)

Meadows Taylor was struck by the thought that intervals of 100 years seemingly separated major historical events in India. He came to see Tara as the first in a planned trilogy of novels to be written to illustrate the key events he had in mind: 1) the rise of a united Maratha challenge to Mughal authority over North India under the guidance of the Marathan leader Sivaji in the late 1650s; 2) the beginning of British dominance in India signalled by the battle at Plassey in 1757; and 3) the repercussions of the Indian Mutiny in 1857.

Shortly after the publication of Tara, Meadows Taylor began thinking about the second novel of the trilogy, which was to incorporate not only the Battle of Plassey but also the infamous "Black Hole of Calcutta" incident. He first approached John Blackwood about its publication in late July of 1864, remarking that the subject "admits of much dramatic treatment, nor has anyone ventured upon it before." (BP, Ms. 4194, ff. 24-25) In late August Blackwood responded by offering to publish the as yet unwritten work on the same financial terms as had been offered for Tara. Taylor agreed to this and managed to finish Ralph Darnell on 16 August 1865, after much delay due to other commitments and sporadic ill health.

Taylor was aware that his new work was not as well written as his previous novel. "He is not Tara," Taylor writes on August 19th, "but

perhaps he is more after the taste of the millions of novel readers, and their sympathies will be more with him, than with Tara." (BP, Ms. 4205, ff. 37-38) Taylor's feelings about the work's weakness may have prompted his asking whether it would not do better as a series in Blackwood's Magazine. Certainly the work lacked the crisp details of his previous works. That two thirds of the work was set in England was also detrimental; they showed Taylor at his worst, plodding through uninspired characterisations of eighteenth century English life. (The effect of this section is apparent in an early twentieth-century Indian abridgement of the work, where the English section is cut out altogether.) It should be noted that it was only with much reservation that Taylor initially decided to incorporate such material in the story. For him it was the only way of answering critics of Tara, almost all of whom had suggested Taylor should produce Indian material the public could identify with. "We have too little sympathy with the feelings of Orientals in our own day to be touched with the sorrows and rejoicings of their remote ancestors," suggested one reviewer, who subsequently admonished Taylor to "choose his subject from his own country and his own time if he cares that his work should be very widely popular."⁴⁰ Another critic stressed that such foreign topics were of no use unless they were linked to European interests. "The great masters of the historical novel," the reviewer exclaimed, specifically pointing to Sir Walter Scott, "have always been most careful to select their themes among those which, however distant, bear upon some matter of home interest, and illustrate some event already familiar through tragic or historic features of its own."⁴¹ Taylor seemed a bit resentful that the

public did not share his excitement about Indian history. In a letter to William Blackwood, on 28 October 1865, Taylor explained:

It was not without much consideration that I began the English portion of it; and that too only in deference to the public taste. I only hope I may not have them wrong: but there is necessarily much more force and picturesqueness in Indian scenes & character if the public would only take the trouble to think so! But we shall see. (BP, Ms. 4205, ff. 55-56)

Comments from the Blackwood firm on Ralph Darnell were muted. In fact, John Blackwood forwent reading the manuscript until it was in the proof stage since, as he commented to Taylor, "I have perfect confidence that you will always write like a man of sense." (BP, Acc. 5643, Vol. D5, p. 371) Despite his confidence, the work was a failure on its publication in November 1865. By the end of 1866 only 284 copies had been sold, and it would take another 14 years for the original edition of 1050 copies to sell out. The novel's lack of success was not solely due to the writing; in fact contemporary reviews were in general very favourable and urged Taylor to continue exploring Indian subjects holding similar British interest. Ralph Darnell's failure to sell was due more to its initial format as an expensive "triple decker" novel: William Blackwood acknowledged this in a letter written several years later, explaining that, although both Tara and Ralph Darnell had deserved more success than they received, "The scenes & pictures of life they described were too strange & unfamiliar to interest the general public and so cause a demand on the libraries as no one now ever dreams of buying a 3 volume novel." (BP, Acc. 5643, vol. D8: 121-122) Ralph Darnell's subsequent publisher, Kegan Paul & Co., had more success selling it

in cheaper one volume editions: between 1879 and 1900 3900 copies were sold out of the approximately 5700 copies printed by their firm.

The failure of Ralph Darnell, although a setback for Taylor, did not dent his determination to complete the trilogy of Indian novels. On 2 September 1866 Taylor was writing to William Blackwood of his next work, eventually published as Seeta: "I am thinking on the subject of 1857, but it is incomparably the most difficult of the series." (BP, Ms. 4216, ff. 5-7) Continued illness and unexpected labour on other projects, such as a study of Indian history published in early 1871, prevented further work on the "Mutiny" novel until later that year.

On 22 July 1871, Taylor completed a synopsis of his "Mutiny" novel, which he sent off to Blackwood's the next day. In the letter accompanying the sketch, he remarked that the work would use the mutiny as the background for a tale involving interracial marriage, in this case between an English district officer and an Indian woman whom Taylor initially named "Savitsee". (Her name was meant as a direct reference to an Indian legend whose heroine, Savitri, or Sita, dies in order to save her husband.) The heroine was to be an "Indian girl full of life and energy, passionate in her love, perhaps capricious and petulant at times, but devoted -even to death." (BP, Ms., 4283, ff. 16-19) The Blackwood firm took its time deciding on the work, and it was not until December that they wrote back to Taylor turning down the publication of the novel. The heroine was subsequently renamed Seeta and the work finished in June 1872. The novel, Seeta, was eventually published in three volumes by Henry S. King in January 1873. Sales and critical response proved strong

enough to warrant republication that same year in a cheaper one volume edition, and the work remained in print through to the end of the nineteenth century.

A Noble Queen was Taylor's last novel, completed in the winter of 1874. Initially serialised in 1875 in both The Overland Mail and The Week's News, it was published posthumously in 1878. Once more Taylor turned to the Indian setting he knew best, the Deccan, for inspiration, grounding the work in sixteenth-century Indian history. And once again Taylor centred his work on a strong, idealised Indian heroine, Queen Chand Bibi, who dies defending her state against invasion by Mughal armies. The work marked a weak end to Taylor's career; the calibre of the writing is uneven, due in part to Taylor's chronic ill health during the period of its composition, and the dialogue, never Taylor's strong point, is weak and stilted. Nevertheless the work, like Seeta, proved consistent in its sales and was frequently reprinted until the turn of the century.

Taylor did not confine his writing solely to fiction; during his time in India he contributed to newspapers and reviews both in India and England (it should be noted that from 1841 to 1853 Taylor was an official India correspondent for the Times in London), and following his retirement in 1860 he continued to contribute articles to journals such as The Edinburgh Review, Fraser's Magazine, and The Athenaeum. Taylor's interest in and knowledge of India and its people led to commissions for letterpresses to accompany various projects on India; these included introductions to works on architecture in various parts of the Deccan region, and summaries for several volumes of photographs of the people of India, produced for

the British Museum between 1868 and 1875. It was perhaps inevitable that Taylor, with such projects to his credit, was asked to write a history of India aimed at students, which he completed in 1870. The work, A Student's Manual of the History of India from the Earliest Period to the Present, was published in early 1871 by Longmans. Public opinion varied as to its usefulness. Some critics welcomed the work as a compact and knowledgable examination of the country's history. Other contemporary critics, however, found Taylor's attempt to compress thousands of years of Indian history into one volume difficult to follow, and noted many historical inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the writing.

Taylor achieved more success with the papers he presented in Ireland and Britain on engineering, archeology, architecture, Indian music and literature: his self taught skills in such areas impressed those who heard him. Indications of his success in these areas can be seen from the honours bestowed upon him: the Institute of Civil Engineers of Ireland not only elected him a member of their society but also granted him a diploma in civil engineering; likewise the Royal Irish Academy made him a life member of their society. One honour was awarded him in October 1865, when he was made a Justice of Peace in Dublin, an honorary title allowing him to hear minor cases. Taylor's highest honour came, however, in June 1869 when he was made a Companion of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India at the personal request of Queen Victoria. There are no other records to indicate further honours bestowed on Taylor, which brings up the question of his designation as "Colonel", seen in most editions of his works after 1863. The highest rank Taylor reached in the Nizam's

service was captain-commandant, which he held from 1843 until his retirement, and in receiving the Star of India he was gazetted as captain, which must indicate that Taylor attained no further official promotion. His subsequent use of the rank of Colonel has since puzzled many commentators, who suggest that this was perhaps an informal gesture among old officers of the Nizam's Service, who felt their work deserved more recognition from the British government. Taylor's only comment on this comes in a letter to John Blackwood on 27 June 1863 discussing its use on the title page. He explains that the appellation, although not official, is validated by the pension he receives: "I am only colonel by courtesy and in virtue of the pension I have as full colonel after 36 years service, so I do not exactly know whether I am warranted in assuming it in the title page of the book." (BP, Ms. 4186, ff- 114-115) Despite this, it was used in most subsequent editions of his works.

Taylor's final major work was his autobiography, which he completed in early 1874. A work of "transparent truthfulness", in one contemporary's view, it was published posthumously by Blackwood & Sons in October 1877, after much editing by Taylor's daughter, Alice Meadows Taylor. Taylor had sent Blackwood's the first volume in January of 1875, after rejecting an initial offer by Henry S. King & Co. of £150 for the first edition, with a ten shillings royalty for any succeeding copies sold. By July of the same year Taylor had lost his eyesight, which prompted his decision to accept an invitation to convalesce in India in September. A few days before leaving England, Taylor forwarded the second volume of his work to Blackwood for review. After Taylor's death the task of revising the work was taken

on by his daughter who, with the help of Henry Reeve, who wrote the introduction, was able to finish work on it in early 1877. Blackwood's initial publication offer was even lower than Henry S. King's: £50 with subsequent profits, once sales cleared cost and expenses, to be divided between Alice Taylor and the publishers. After strong objections to this from Henry Reeve, the offer was amended to £100 for the first edition, with royalties on subsequent editions to be divided equally between the two parties.

Upon publication the work sold extremely well, going through four editions in four years. It was widely reviewed and highly praised. The general consensus is perhaps best seen in the one line summary of the Fortnightly Review, which called it, "Memoirs of a great Indian administrator on a small scale."⁴² It was perhaps with this in mind that reviewers urged prospective civil servants to purchase the book before embarking on the voyage to India.

Certainly Taylor's autobiography was, and still is, the most accessible of his works, due to the simple and unpretentious manner of the writing. Taylor's life, full of incident and an example of persistence and honest endeavour, translated well in print. But a student of literature can only wonder what Taylor's life might have been had he remained in England in 1840, on the expiration of his furlough, and developed the potential seen in his first work Confessions of a Thug. It is possible that had this occurred, Taylor's literary reputation might be very different today: instead of being labelled a minor author of historical romances, he might have become the writer to rival Rudyard Kipling for preeminence in nineteenth century British writing on India.

Notes

1. Taylor, Philip Meadows, The Story of My Life, 2nd ed., 1878, 3.
2. Ibid., 7.
3. Ibid., 8.
4. Ibid., 9.
5. For a detailed discussion on the subject see Eric Stokes' The English Utilitarians and India.
6. For a detailed history of the development of the Nizam's contingent in the first half of the nineteenth century, see the anonymously written "Hyderabad: -The Nizam's Contingent," Calcutta Review, 11.21 (Jan. 1849): 141-219.
7. Taylor, 45.
8. Ibid., 48.
9. Ibid., 38.
10. Ibid., 37.
11. Cadell, Sir Patrick, ed., The Letters of Philip Meadows Taylor to Henry Reeve, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947, XVIII.
12. Taylor, 37.
13. Cadell, XIX.
14. Taylor, 39-40.
15. Cadell, XX.
16. Ibid., XVII.
17. Philip Meadows Taylor of Le Mas D'Azil, A Memoir of the Family of Taylor of Norwich, London, 1886, 8.
18. Taylor, The Story of My Life, 240-241.
19. Dennis Kincaid, British Social Life in India, 1608-1937, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1973, 175.
20. Cadell, 269-270.
21. Cadell, 270.
22. Ibid., XXI.
23. Taylor, The Story of My Life, 456.

24. (Following the suppression of the "mutiny", the ceded districts were returned to the Nizam and a large proportion of his debts to the British was rescinded in appreciation of his loyalty to the British during the troubles.)
25. New Monthly Magazine, 38 (1833): 286.
26. Taylor, The Story of My Life, 57.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 72.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 101.
31. Ibid., 106.
32. Ibid., 112.
33. Cadell, 32.
34. Ibid., 38.
35. Taylor, The Story of My Life, 456-57.
36. Blackwood Papers, Ms 4165, f 1. (Subsequent references to the Blackwood Papers are noted in brackets as BP in the text.)
37. Bentley Papers, Ms 46656, ff 200.
38. Ibid., Ms 46656, ff 201.
39. Ibid.
40. Times, Nov 5 1863: 12.
41. The Saturday Review, Oct 31 1863: 587.
42. Fortnightly Review, 22 (Nov 1 1877): 730.

2. CONFESSIONS OF A THUG

In 1839 Philip Meadows Taylor published his first novel, Confessions of a Thug. It was the first work of fiction to deal with Thuggism, which it identified as an Indian religious cult, involving ritual murder by strangulation. This subject had come to the attention of the British authorities only in the early nineteenth century. Taylor's novel was both highly topical and very successful. It made him popular in literary circles, and possibly influenced other authors such as Eugene Sue, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and (some speculate) even Charles Dickens to write on the subject. The novel's success seems to have been due not only to its highly exotic theme but also to its successful blending of several genres popular at the time: romance, Gothic tragedy and criminal drama. Taylor's work also managed to convey a certain authority, which was enough to convince at least one critic that the work,

though most of those who have casually perused it have probably supposed it a romance, superinduced on a slender substratum of reality --is, in sooth, in almost every incident of its fiendish narrative, "an ower true tale."¹

Confessions of a Thug detailed the supposedly "true confessions" of a Thug Ameer Ali. In the introduction, Taylor describes the work as factual, claiming the incidents were related to him by a Thug he interrogated in his role as a colonial police officer in the early 1830's. However, as I shall discuss in detail later, Taylor in fact based many of the incidents in Confessions of a Thug on Ramaseeana, a

compendium of reports on Thuggism published about the time Taylor began work on his novel.

Ramaseeana was the first substantial work in English to attempt a description of what Thuggism was, albeit in a rather uncoordinated way (although one descriptive piece had been published as early as 1816 by Dr. William Sherwood). Consequently it was extremely important in promulgating certain views on the nature of Thuggism that have been challenged only recently. It was written and compiled by Captain (later Major-General) William H. Sleeman and published in 1836. Sleeman was an officer of the East India Company army who had been engaged in suppressing Thuggism since the early 1820's. Ramaseeana was a record of the work done and information uncovered by him and other police officers up to 1836. It is an unstructured compilation of information, consisting of an introductory essay on the history of Thuggism, a listing of the secret vocabulary said to be used solely by Thugs, several reports, letters and statistics on the capture and trials of Thugs, and several confessions. Also included are family trees drawn up by Sleeman to prove his contention that Thuggism was hereditary in nature.

"Thuggism" and "Thug" are words which derive from the Sanskrit root sthaga, meaning to conceal, which, translated into the Hindi vernacular as thag, means to deceive or cheat. According to Ramaseeana and other reports that came out during the early nineteenth century, the Thugs were stranglers who had dedicated their lives to the Hindu goddess Kali. Thugs supposedly roamed India in small bands and strangled unsuspecting travellers as a form of human sacrifice to their goddess. The religious feelings that might have

motivated some of the practitioners of Thuggism were no doubts combined or replaced in others with a strong concern for material gain. Other major features of the Thuggee cult allegedly included secret rites, strict rules of conduct and a secret language.

Thug activities were said to be divided along hierarchical lines: Thugs worked their way up from lowly duties such as scouting, sentry duty and grave digging, to the ultimate position or rank of bhurtote, or strangler. Induction ceremonies supposedly included swearing oaths over consecrated pickaxes and eating consecrated sugar, or goor. Those promoted to the strangler rank reputedly underwent intensive training in the art of strangling from a guru, or mentor. The spiritual bonds between guru and disciple were said to be so strong that "a Thug will often rather betray his father than the gooroo by whom he has been knighted."²

Strict attention was supposedly devoted to omens during Thug expeditions. According to most British sources, Thugs relied on a complicated system of rules and a detailed analysis of auspices and omens seen and heard during their expeditions to determine what to do, whom to choose as victims, and when and where to attack their prey. Bird and animal calls, particularly of crows and jackals, were attended to, and sightings of certain beasts were particularly noted. For example, a hare crossing a Thug's path during an expedition was a particularly evil omen and supposedly signalled immediate danger to the group.

Finally, in keeping with the Masonlike depiction of Thuggism, Thugs were said to have secret signs and a secret language with which to identify and communicate with fellow Thugs. Special signs drawn

on roads helped keep Thugs aware of group movements, and specific phrases were used which, if responded to properly, identified Thugs of different groups to each other.

Thugs were also known as phansigars, derived from the Hindi root phansi, or noose, and it is under this name that they are described in a few pre-nineteenth century European travelling accounts. The one most often quoted is that of Jean de Thevenot, a Frenchman who travelled through Turkey, Persia, and India between 1652 and 1667 and in 1665 wrote of hearing of stranglers infesting the roads between Delhi and Agra:

The cunningest robbers in the world are in that Countrey(sic). They use a certain slip with a running-noose, which they can cast with so much slight about a mans neck, when they are within reach of him,³ that they never fail; so that they strangle him in a trice.³

Thevenot then described the phansigars' tactics of using attractive women to lure travellers into ambushes and their skill in lassoing unwilling victims and their animals:

There are men in those quarters so skilful in casting the snare, that they succeed as well at a distance as near at hand; and if an ox or any other beast belonging to a caravan run away, as sometimes it happens, they fail not to catch it by the neck.⁴

This is the earliest European account of Thuggism to be noted by commentators on Thuggism. It was used particularly by Sleeman in tracing the historical development of Thuggee practices. Although Thevenot's account is obviously based on hearsay and perhaps a little romantic exaggeration, the contention that Thuggism existed at least as far back as the middle of the seventeenth century is backed up by a Mughal Imperial decree issued in 1671 in the province of Ahmadabad providing for the offence of strangling, mentioned by Benedicte

Hjejele in her thesis, The Social Policy of the East India Company with Regard to Sati, Slavery, Thagi and Infanticide, 1772-1858.⁵

An even earlier non-European account alluded to by commentators tracing Thuggee past was Zia-ud-Barni's history of Jalalu-d din Firoz Khilji, Sultan of Delhi, written in 1356. This mentioned that "about A.D. 1290 a thousand Thugs were captured at Delhi but that the Sultan with misplaced clemency, refused to sanction their execution, shipped them off to Lakhnaut, and there let them loose."⁶

Another brief but better substantiated European description of Phansigars appeared more than a century after Thevenot's account in James Forbes' Oriental Memoirs, published in 1813. Describing Sarungpoor when he passed through it in 1785, Forbes explained:

A jatterah or religious fair is occasionally kept there; at which our fellow traveller, Siad Mahommed, a particular friend of Sir Charles Malet's, was present, on his last journey to Delhi; when several men were taken up for a most cruel method of robbery and murder, practised on travellers, by a tribe called Phanseegurs, or stranglers, who join passengers frequenting the fair, in bye-roads, or at other seasons convenient for their purpose: under the pretence of travelling the same way, they enter into conversation with the strangers, share their sweetmeats, and pay them other little attentions, until an opportunity offers of suddenly throwing a rope round their neck with a slip knot, by which they dexterously contrive to strangle them on the spot.

None of these accounts mentioned the religious nature of Thuggism, the aspect which was to fascinate most later British chroniclers. They did suggest, however, that Thuggism was a highly organised, highly specialised crime with known methods used against specific targets.

Central to the supposedly ritualistic nature of Thuggism emphasised by later nineteenth-century writers was the worship of the goddess Kali. Understanding what Kali represented can be confusing,

as she was a multi-dimensional figure worshipped for different reasons in different parts of India. She is generally known today as the Great Mother Goddess, one who represents the energy of the universe, both as the creator and destroyer of life. The notion of a Mother Goddess has been present in Indian religion for several thousand years. The Mother Goddess appears in the form of small figurines and sculptures in the earliest known culture in India, the Indus Valley Civilization (ca.2700-1700 B.C.).⁸ Scholars speculate that the worship of a Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley may have originated from contact with Sumerian civilisations. After the arrival of the Aryans (ca.1500-1200 B.C.), the concept of the Mother Goddess was less emphasised and "probably survived from the Indus Civilization in the form of folk art and myth."⁹ During the Gupta Age (ca.300-500 A.D.), as Hinduism developed, the Mother Goddess was revived and transmuted from a benign figure into a more active and destructive force. It is at this period that we get mention of Kali as one of the many names of the Mother Goddess.

In discussing Kali, it is important to realise that Hinduism is divided, primarily between the monistic view or interpretation of Hinduism, which holds that the various views of the divine God are ordered into descending levels of understanding of one truth, which is known as Higher Hinduism, and a less philosophical and a more humble belief in the worship of many gods in the forms of various animals, trees, inanimate objects and even diseases, known as Popular or Sectarian Hinduism.¹⁰ It is as part of the latter that Kali is to be found under various guises: she is the Mother Goddess, the consort of Shiva, the goddess of time and also the goddess of destruction,

responsible for epidemics, cataclysms and smallpox, among other things.

It was as the goddess of destruction that Kali was worshipped by the Thugs, and the Thugs accounted for their connection with her through a reinterpretation of a Hindu myth. There are several versions of this myth, all of which concern the birth of Kali. In the Mahabharata, Brahma creates Kali to keep the population of Earth in check. In one popular version, Kali is created to destroy Raktavira, a giant demon that devoured humans as they were created. A unique feature of Raktavira was that every drop of his blood turned into another demon when it touched the ground. Kali killed Raktavira with her sword but then had to deal with the demons that sprang up from him. The orthodox version of the myth held that she solved this by killing the demons and licking their wounds of all blood, thus allowing none to hit the ground. The Thugs claimed that Kali, unable to lick the wounds quickly enough, created two Thugs from the sweat of her brow (or arm, depending on the version used), and gave them each a handkerchief with which to strangle the demons. Because of their efficiency, they speedily dispatched the demons and Kali granted them the right to work as stranglers in her honour, living by the plunder acquired through their efforts, for "having been the means of enabling the world to get provided with men by the destruction of the demons, their posterity would be entitled to take a few for their own use."¹¹

Although Kali was a Hindu goddess, implying that all Thugs who worshipped her were Hindus, many bands captured and convicted of Thuggee activities were composed of both Muslims and Hindus. One of

the earliest official reports on Thugs, Dr. William Sherwood's article, first published in The Madras Literary Gazette in 1816, republished in Asiatic Researches in 1820, and reproduced in Ramaseeana, stated that the religious composition of Thug bands varied from region to region. Claiming that Thug bands were composed primarily of Muslims, he suggested more specifically that the Thugs in the more northern parts of India divided into three classes:

The first consists chiefly of Mahomedans who originally resided under the protection of Zemindars of large estates....The second class is composed of Hindus, who are for the most part of the Lodeh caste, and is much more numerous than the former....the third class is more considerable in respect to number, and extends over a larger tract of country than either of the foregoing classes. It consists of desperate associations of all castes, which grew up in the Pergunnahs of Sindouse and Purhara, and the neighbouring villages in the Mahratta territories.¹²

In Ramaseeana, lists of captured or suspected Thugs also suggest that gangs often were composed of both Muslim and Hindu members. Such is the case when we examine a listing of Thugs under the leadership of Feringea, a notorious Thug captured by Sleeman in 1830. With Feringea's confession and subsequent help Sleeman was able to locate the buried remains of many Thug victims and to track down many of the Thug groups said to be operating throughout India. Feringea's men, who were released in 1832, included (out of a total of 62) 20 Muslims, 4 Brahmins, 5 Lodhees (or in Dr. Sherwood's article, Lodehs) and 3 Rajputs, with the remainder belonging to various Hindu sects.¹³ Likewise, in a listing of 440 suspected heads of Thug families, Sleeman named 189 Muslims, 95 Brahmins, 63 Lodhees and 25 Rajputs, with the remainder belonging, again, to various Hindu sects.¹⁴

This puzzled some commentators, and the apparent contradiction of Muslims worshipping a Hindu goddess was explained only with

difficulty. The first point brought up was that Thuggism may have been introduced into India by wandering Muslims prior to or around the thirteenth century. Thug legend claimed that the Thugs were descended from seven clans of Muslim Thugs, who, "by the consent of all Thugs throughout India, whether Hindoos or Mahommuduns, are admitted to be the most ancient, and the great original trunk upon which all the others have at different times and in different places been grafted."¹⁵ This was not to be confused with the Thugs' supposed beliefs in the divine origin of their system, which was still grounded in Hindu myth, as already discussed. The introduction of Thuggism to India by Muslims was followed, according to the argument, by a period of consolidation, whereby the original clans possibly coopted Hindus into their groups. At some point the beliefs of the new members were grafted onto the structure of Thuggism until they became a main agent of Thugs' actions. This is how the origins of Thuggism were described in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, published in 1906. After explaining that the worship of Kali often involved animal sacrifices, the commentator stated:

These facts enable one to realize that, in medieval India, there might readily appear a community organized on the basis of the worship of the goddess and the practice of murder and robbery. At first it would differ but little, if at all, from an ordinary criminal tribe; and the first Thags [sic] would be ignorant Hindus who had been worshippers of the goddess before they formed the society to strangle and rob unwary travellers. To pass from participation in human sacrifice before the altar of the goddess to the search for victims for her on the high roads would be no violent change.¹⁶

Muslims, according to the same source, were not loath to participate in such worship, since "so many are today accustomed to supplement Muslim rites with the cult of Hindu divinities."¹⁷ It should be

noted that this description of Thuggism goes a great deal further than Ramaseeana in emphasising the religious nature of Thuggism. While Sleeman saw Thugs primarily as criminals with a religious defence for their behaviour, the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics sees them initially as perpetrators of human sacrifice who subsequently become criminals, thus reversing the order to underscore the religious aspect.

This is a good example of a subtle yet pervasive slant to almost all nineteenth-century discussions of Thuggism. While critics were prepared to admit the Muslim influence and the Muslim presence in Thug groups, they insisted that Hinduism was at the heart of most Thuggee actions. Commentators were intent on turning Thuggism into a national network of groups operating from the same principles, with a common language and a common system of signs and rules, in spite of evidence that Thug groups varied tremendously from region to region. As I shall discuss below, such intentions were due in part to an urge on the part of many critics to discredit Indian religions and morals. We can see this implied in an ambiguous way in Ramaseeana.

Some of the more contentious aspects of Ramaseeana are Sleeman's arguments that Thuggism was a religious act practiced for centuries by certain tribes and a hereditary profession. The wide extent to which it was practiced, and particularly the problems encountered in prosecuting Thugs in Indian states which were outside the jurisdiction of the British, were points used to argue for an extension of the more efficient British system of government in India. Thus Thuggism, Sleeman argued, as a system

of merciless and indiscriminate assassination was still more general than that of the Pindaries, that it was the growth of ages, extended all over India, and being founded in the

faith of religious ordinance and dispensation, had become so deeply rooted in the soil, that nothing but the interposition, under providence, of the Supreme Government, and the acquiescence, support and co-operation of all its dependent chiefs, could possibly extirpate it.¹⁸

The Pindaries, it should be mentioned, was a name given to bands of mounted plunderers hired by native princes to raid, pillage and plunder the inhabitants of other states, thereby weakening the resistance of opponents and perhaps aiding in takeover bids against neighbouring native states.

Such arguments concerning Thuggism became more common as the century progressed, and yet the original contentions remain hard to prove or disprove today, in view of or because of the lack of information concerning Thuggism's origins. Certainly Thuggism or Thuggee became regarded as one of the most sensational and shocking of Indian "religious" activities to come to the attention of the British in the early nineteenth century. These included such practices as suttee, or the burning alive of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, and hook-swinging, an activity whereby religious fanatics hung themselves in the air on the end of ropes by hooks driven through their chests. Regarding Thuggism, however, if we examine Sleeman's evidence certain discrepancies come to light, particularly concerning its hereditary nature.

Sleeman presents what he feels is strong evidence concerning the passing on of Thuggist practices in families in the form of a genealogical chart or family tree listing several Thug groups. At the heart of the matter was the reputed custom of Thugs, whether childless or not, of occasionally adopting young children encountered in their expeditions in order to train them in Thuggist ways. This

is supposedly illustrated in many of the family connections Sleeman traces in the chart. What he and other proponents of this family system failed to account for were the many confessions, found even in Ramaseeana, by Thugs who had no such origins but were simply displaced ryots or landless labourers, who joined expeditions without in any way being skilled in the secret ways of Thuggism. We find accounts of stranglings by men who knew nothing about secret oaths and rituals. Indeed, many of the Ramaseeana accounts read like workmanlike descriptions of mass murders, with little or no mention of any religious significance. Instead, there are discussions of amounts of plunder gained or lost, and even laments at the slim pickings acquired on some expeditions. The overwhelming impression gained on reading these accounts is that these men were motivated solely by the plunder gained by strangling. It is a livelihood entirely lacking in moral or religious overtones, and here it must be stressed that it seems in these accounts that Thuggism was an occupation for many of the confessors. The image one gets is of various criminal bands using similar methods to kill, each perhaps composed of a hard core group of long term practitioners, who recruited men, not necessarily family members, to go on long term expeditions solely for monetary gains.

This does not explain why they felt it necessary to kill, still less to strangle every victim. But one plausible explanation is that victims were done away with in such a way as to make detection of the crime even harder. Dead bodies, particularly in the days before forensic science was known and perfected, did not reveal much about the culprits. Thus, Sleeman observes,

They [Thugs] permit no living witness to their crimes to escape, and therefore never attempt the murder of any party until they can feel secure of being able to murder the whole....Having in the course of ages matured a system by which the attainment of any other direct evidence to their guilt is rendered almost impossible, they bind each other to secrecy [sic] by the most sacred oaths that their superstition can afford.¹⁹

One cannot argue with the sheer number of victims uncovered by the British officials in charge of extirpating Thuggism. The British were astounded and perplexed by the almost inhuman manner in which Thugs sought their victims, and their perplexity may explain in part the emphasis laid on the religious aspects of Thuggism by European commentators. The religious significance and the ritualistic nature of such actions were attempts to explain how Thugs could so calmly go about strangling victims in such a disinterested way. Somehow it seemed more comprehensible if every Thug could be portrayed as acting out of a misguided allegiance to a depraved and secret religious mission.

This was the main thesis of several articles and books on Thuggism written after Ramaseeana was published. It should be noted that while Sleeman emphasised the religious nature of Thuggism, he did not use it to condemn Hinduism in general. He blamed the development and success of Thuggism on the widespread superstitious dread of Thugs, the lack of effective policing and laws, the difficulty of capturing Thugs in the act of strangling, and the effect of bribes on low paid Indian officials and village chiefs in the villages the Thugs supposedly operated from. These, Sleeman stated, were the difficulties he had encountered in his work against the Thugs. Sleeman, however, was not thereby exonerating Hinduism. He did not mention it by name but implied that it was partly responsible for a

certain lack of moral concern in Indian society. Thus, arguing that the Thugs survived by conciliating the circles of society in which they lived and moved with "large expenditures of booty they acquire on their annual expeditions," Sleeman stated:

In such circles, the dreadful trade of murder by which they earn their incomes, even when known or suspected, as it commonly is, hardly ever makes them odious; for the want of sympathy between men of different casts, or different places of abode, is, unhappily, the grand characteristic of Indian society.²⁰

Later commentators were not so moderate in their condemnation of Hinduism and Indian morals. Thuggism provided good material for those urging an increase in Britain's evangelising mission. One particularly shrill voice, in a book based entirely on Sleeman's Ramaseeana, remarked:

That giant power, which has held the human race in chains wherever the pure and unadulterated doctrines of Revelation have not penetrated, has in India revelled in the wantonness of prosperity; the foundations of delusion have been laid wide and deep; the poison of a false and brutalizing creed has been insinuated into every action of daily life...²¹

The author proceeded to explain that it was the fault of Hinduism that such evil actions were sanctioned:

The genius of Paganism, which has deified every vice, and thus provided a justification of the indulgence of every evil propensity, has furnished the Thugs with a patron goddess, worthy of those whom she is believed to protect.²²

Such words are to be expected from those with a point to push and limited information to operate from. What is most striking in such accounts was the refusal to look beyond religion to see what other factors were responsible for Thuggism. An England shocked by the actions of the Edinburgh team of Burke and Hare in 1828 was equally shocked by Thuggism, which drew an interesting parallel from one writer:

The principle of Assassination was religion. The principle of Burking was gain. In Thuggee they are both united. Gain sanctioned by religion; human rapacity exercised under the supposed approbation of the deity is its principle.²³

Such attempts at finding similarities did not extend far, particularly in nineteenth-century discussions of the social causes of Burking and Thuggism. In Victorian Studies in Scarlet, Richard Altick makes an interesting point concerning contemporary views on Burking. The political and propaganda value of the Burke and Hare revelations was immense, particularly for their possible use in highlighting the conditions in which Burke and Hare's victims lived. But there was no noticeable effect, aside from legislation to regulate the traffic in cadavers. "Nobody," Altick explains,

remarked that the preponderant indictment in the case of Burke and Hare was of a whole neglectful society rather than of two relatively negligible criminals and a woman "paramour." After Burke was executed and Hare, having turned King's evidence, was set free, public passions subsided and, except for the absence of Burke, British society was not an iota improved.²⁴

Thuggism, by contrast, proved of great political and propagandist value. Commentators set out not only to expose the religious basis of Thuggism but also to point to Indian society's so-called moral deficiencies and the native governments' corrupt and inefficient ways as partial explanations for Thuggism's existence and pervasiveness. Few paused to ask whether it was a more economically based problem whose roots lay in the social and political instability of India before and during the early stages of British colonial expansion.

Several critics, the earliest and most controversial being Hiralal Gupta, make this last point an important issue in their discussions of Thuggism. Thuggism, they suggest, was a result of the times, an

occupation taken up in desperation by the starving or the destitute, either to survive or as a way of protesting against their conditions. yet this latter point too seems farfetched, particularly as the Thugs were said, even by the British administrators, to avoid striking at their "oppressors" (we can assume this means the British rulers and the Indian princes). Instead they concentrated solely on robbing Indian travellers, who often were poor and of humble background. It seems equally difficult to argue that Thugs can be classified as "social bandits", or criminals whose activities were a form of protest within peasant societies against oppression by wealthy landlords and the upper castes. Such is not the case with most Thug groups since, as I mentioned earlier, figures published on them indicate that a substantial amount of members were drawn from high castes such as the Brahmins and the Rajputs, and it was maintained by British authorities that the Thugs, rather than oppressing those in high positions, maintained good relations by offering substantial gifts to princes in order to operate unmolested from their areas of control.

There is more to the theory that Thugs may have drawn their recruits from displaced ryots, and we need look no further than Ramaseeana to note various confessions from former land cultivators who were recruited for Thug expeditions. One cultivator joined a Thug group on being offered four rupees a month salary, and over a period of time helped strangle 12 people before turning approver.²⁵ Another man joined a Thug group after a famine killed his family and forced him to wander in search of a job. Although not participating

in any stranglings, he witnessed over 16 murders before being captured and turning approver.²⁶

The connection with poverty was also noticed by Philip Meadows Taylor, whose writings on Thugs betray less of the religious hysteria marking other contemporary pieces on the subject. In an early article on Thuggism, published in 1833 in New Monthly Magazine, before the appearance of Ramaseeana, Meadows Taylor suggested that Thug groups were not composed solely of trained exponents of strangling:

The gangs do not always consist of persons who are Thugs by birth. It is customary for them to entice, by the promise of monthly pay or the hopes of amassing money that are held out, many persons, who are ignorant of the deeds of death that are to be perpetrated for the attainment of these objects, until made aware of the reality by seeing the victims of their cupidity fall under the hands of the stranglers.²⁷

Taylor was also sceptical about the secret language said to be used by all Thug members. Thugs did not use a secret language, he suggested, so much as "sets of slang terms and phrases which give them the means of holding a conversation with persons of their own class, without any chance of being understood by the uninitiated."²⁸ What struck him most was the quick and almost intuitive way Thugs seemed to recognize each other, which was "almost enough to warrant the supposition, that a sort of Freemasonry has been established among them."²⁹ Taylor did not pursue the connection any further.

Taylor's article on the Thugs, like his later novel, betrays an ambiguous attitude towards the true causes of Thuggism. Like Sleeman, Taylor is less prone to emphasise the religious nature of Thuggism as the motivation for Thuggee activities, suggesting instead

that plunder was the main objective. Taylor concludes his article by implying that the lax governments of native states are more to blame for the pervasiveness of Thuggism than any religious dread of Thugs or fear of divine retribution amongst native Indians. "The impunity," Taylor states,

with which the Thugs have heretofore carried on their merciless proceedings, the facility they have possessed of recruiting their numbers -which are restricted to no particular caste or sect- the security they have had of escaping detection, and the ease with which they have usually purchased their release, when seized by the officers of the weak native governments, in whose dominions they have usually committed their greatest depredations, have altogether so tended to confirm the system, and to disseminate it to the fearful extent to which it has now attained, that the life of no single traveller on any of the roads in the country has been safe, and but a slight chance has been afforded to large parties of escaping the fangs of the blood-thirsty demons who have frequented them.³⁰

The interest in Thuggism generated by this early article led Meadows Taylor to write his first book, Confessions of a Thug. The editor of New Monthly Magazine at the time of the publication of the Thug article, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, suggested that Taylor try writing a novel on Thuggism, and in 1835 Taylor began work on it. The novel was inspired by an early encounter with a former Thug, whom Taylor mentions briefly in a footnote to his article. Estimating the amount of deaths caused yearly by Thugs, Taylor noted:

Ameer Ali, an approver and noted Thug, now at this place, declares and glories in having been present at the murder of 719 persons, whose property is estimated at two lacs and a half of rupees!³¹

Taylor finished writing Confessions of a Thug before sailing on leave for England in 1838. It was published by Richard Bentley in 1839, and proved extremely successful.

Confessions of a Thug appealed to early critics particularly for its contrasting depiction of the general amorality of the Thugs and the occasionally noble characteristics of the main character, Ameer Ali. Taylor's knowledgeable descriptions of India were also admired. A reviewer for The Times remarked that in Confessions of a Thug "the sombre history of the miscreants whose cruelty and artifice he drew from the life, was relieved by touches of singular truth and pathos. Even the inhuman superstition of Thuggee," the writer continued, "was blended with some of the nobler qualities of the human heart -a singular contradiction, which is fully borne out by the evidence on record as to the lives of many hundreds of convicted Thugs; and the rich colouring of Oriental life, the varied manners of the mixed population of India, joined to a very striking power of local description, gave a charm even to that tale of crime."³²

What impressed almost all reviewers was what they took to be the novel's realism. Critics, with very few exceptions, took the work at face value as the true "confessions" of one man, and several commentators quoted the novel as fact when making points about the nature of Thuggism. One writer used the novel as a source for a description of Sleeman. Quoting word for word from the novel, Sir Francis Tuke wrote in his account of Thuggism, The Yellow Scarf, of the informer Ameer Ali stating of Sleeman: "A tall noble-looking person he was, and from the severe glance he cast on me I thought my hour was come, and that ere night I should cease to exist."³³ These words, if anything, were most likely Taylor's own impression of Sleeman, rather than the original words of Ameer. Sleeman himself, though presumably fully aware of its origins, used the work to recollect in his Rambles and Recollections that the Thug Amir Ali,



whose confessions are recorded in Meadows Taylor's fascinating book, The Confessions of a Thug, written in 1837 and first published in 1839, proudly admitted having taken part in the murders of 719 persons, and regretted that an interruption of his career by twelve years imprisonment in Oudh had prevented him from completing a full thousand of victims. He regarded his profession as affording sport of the most exciting kind possible.³⁴

Thus Sleeman knowingly blurs fact with fiction. Ameer did exist and had admitted to killing 719 people. Sleeman does not allude to the fact that several of the adventures in the novel were lifted from his own work Ramaseeana, something he could not have failed to see in reading the work.

Early readers of Confessions of a Thug may perhaps be excused for thinking it to be an "ower true tale," since Taylor did nothing to disabuse them of such a notion. In fact, Taylor confidently stated in his introduction,

The tale of crime which forms the subject of the following pages is, alas! almost all true; what there is of fiction has been supplied only to connect the events, and make the adventures of Ameer Ali as interesting as the nature of his horrible profession would permit me.³⁵

How much of the work is true and how much purely Taylor's imagination is subject to debate. But the extent to which Taylor used his talent to give interest to his tale can be seen when we compare the original sources of some of Ameer Ali's "adventures" with the end product.

The work details the life story of Ameer Ali, as told to an English officer. Ameer begins his story by describing his family, but breaks down almost immediately while describing his sister, whom he strangles unknowingly late in his life:

He got up and walked across the room, his irons clanking as he moved. It was horrible to see the workings of his face. At last he said, Sahib, this is weakness. I could not conceal it; I little thought I should have been thus moved at so early a period of my story; but recollections crowded

on me so fast, that I felt confused, and very sick. (vol. I, p. 11)

This, of course, makes Ameer Ali only too evidently a man of strong feelings about family affection. Later in the work a similar outburst from Ameer, while recalling the death of his son, provokes much sympathy from the anonymous English recorder, who for the most part has remained in the background:

Although the mind would ordinarily reject sympathy with the joys or sorrows of a murderer like Ameer Ali, one so deeply stained with crime of the most revolting nature, yet for the moment I was moved to see, that after the lapse of nearly twenty years, by his account, the simple mention of the death of his favourite child could so much effect [sic] him, even to tears, and they were genuine. (vol. II, p. 279)

Such sections also moved reviewers of the novel to note the contrast between such emotion and the apparent nonchalance with which Ameer recalled most of his exploits.

But to return to the plot. When Ameer's family is strangled by Thugs he is adopted by the gang's leader, a Muslim. Ameer is taught Thuggee ways and eventually is initiated into the mysteries of ritual strangling by a Hindu guru. Soon Ameer rises to a position of leadership, mainly because of his skill, fearlessness, and intelligence.

Initially the work rehashes standard descriptions of Thuggee activities found in Ramaseeana and other early reports on Thuggism. Once we get past Ameer's childhood, though, and into his exploits as a Thug, the work becomes more openly a pure adventure tale, with a bit of romance inserted for good measure, and Ameer takes on all the characteristics of a romantic hero. He is a handsome man, adept at swordsmanship and fearless in the face of danger. Ameer is also

quite boastful, as seen, for example, in recounting the skills learned from his athletic instructor:

I must say, however, that under his tuition I had become highly expert at all manly exercises; I could use a gun, throw a spear, wrestle, knew the exact use of every description of sword, straight or crooked, single or double-edged, long or short, and in all these exercises there was not a lad of the village, and I may say of the country round, who could in any way compete with me. (vol. II, p. 55)

As far as fighting skills go, Ameer possesses the Indian equivalent of the manly qualities which would distinguish the English hero of a typical Victorian historical romance. These qualities are regarded as equally out of the ordinary for the Thugs portrayed in the novel. This is particularly highlighted in an episode where Ameer duels with a potential victim. Ameer's group of Thugs is disturbed by two travellers while disposing of a party of merchants. One of them is immediately killed, but the other traveller stands his ground and challenges Ameer to a duel. Ameer accepts and makes short work of him, raising his reputation among his men, who assure him afterwards that "a Thug having killed a traveller and a soldier in fair open combat was an unprecedented circumstance, and only required to be known to make me the envy of old and young." (vol II, p. 180)

Ameer not only possesses courage and fine fighting skills but also a smooth tongue. He is a suave diplomat, able to deceive others with his polished manners and speech. Illustrating this, Taylor inserts an extended section detailing a Pindary raid which Ameer and his men join. This section is a picaresque account of a military style raiding expedition in which Ameer distinguishes himself more by his smooth tongue than his Thuggee experience. Ameer is able to extort more money and supplies from nearby towns than anyone else without

resorting to force, which endears him to the freebooter leader, Cheetoo, and enables Ameer to rise swiftly through the Pindary ranks. Ameer's career as a Pindary is curtailed when he is exposed as a Thug and he and his men must flee for their lives.

Ameer is also a dashing lover, and Taylor, in the typical fashion of writers of Indian romances, never fails to add the romantic interludes needed to spice up the narrative. On Ameer's first expedition as an initiated Thug, he and his father's gang of Thugs arrive at the small town of Oomerkher, where the "Nuwab Hoosein Yar Jung Buhadoor" resides. Ameer falls immediately in love with Zora, one of the Nawaub's dancing girls. It is not long before Ameer rescues her from the Nawaub's clutches and sets off with her for Hyderabad, where she is reunited with her family. The escape is very dramatic: Zora slips out the window of her room down some knotted sheets and hides inside a palanquin until well outside the town walls. This particular romance ends unhappily when the couple arrive in Hyderabad. Zora is spirited away by her mother, who objects to Ameer seeing or marrying her, and is never heard of again.

The reader is quickly compensated for any disappointment caused by this turn of events, as Ameer is almost immediately off on another rescue mission, this time on behalf of an unknown woman. Wandering disconsolately through the streets of Hyderabad after a final attempt to see Zora (an incident which involves an amusing encounter with Zora's mother in which Ameer ends up beating her with his slipper), Ameer is accosted by a slave girl, who entreats him to save her mistress, Azima, who has fallen in love with him when previously glimpsing him on the street. The woman, naturally, wishes to flee

from the clutches of an abusive husband, and Ameer is the hero who must help her. Flowery passages abound in this section. Azima confesses, "My liver turned to water as I looked on your beauty, and I pined for you till my attendants thought I should have died." (vol. II, p. 83) His response is equally full of ardour: "He [Allah] has sent a devoted slave,...one whose soul burns with love, such as that of the bulbul to the rose: speak, and I will do your bidding." (ibid) And so Ameer effects another rescue, with a happy ending, for he and Azima are married soon afterwards, despite her previous marriage tie, and live happily until Ameer's eventual downfall following his arrest and unmasking as a Thug.

Ameer is also involved in a final romantic episode which does not end so auspiciously, and this episode clearly demonstrates how Taylor shapes and adds to some of his original source material. In Ramaseeana, Sleeman records a confession made by Feringea on the 10th of July, 1835, in which Feringea described how his gang fell in with a Moghulanee, or Persian woman, travelling with a female servant, a one armed manservant and six palanquin bearers. The gang tired of her and tried to shake her off after a few days, but the woman refused to take leave of the Thugs. Feringea then insisted that she be killed, explaining:

She...told me that I must go to her home with her near Agra, or she would get me into trouble; and being a Brahmun while she was a Musulman, I was afraid that I should be accused of improper intercourse, and turned out of cast.³⁶

Members of the gang seemed to corroborate this. They vehemently denied any improper behaviour between the two, but one described how Feringea "had a good deal of conversation with her, and she had taken a great fancy to him."³⁷ The man continued, "She was very fair and

beautiful, and we should never have killed her had he not urged us to do so."³⁸ The woman and her group were duly strangled, and Feringea was said to have helped pull her out of the palanquin to complete the job.

Taylor makes use of this little incident, which takes up less than two pages in Ramaseeana, and adds quite a bit to it. The question in Taylor's mind when he read the passage must have been, "What might have happened if Feringea had fallen for the woman?" He sets out to describe such an encounter in Confessions of a Thug.

In Taylor's version, which extends over thirty pages, the woman is accompanied by eight bearers, some soldiers and a servant girl. She attaches herself to the Thug group, led by Ameer, because, as she later confesses to him, she has fallen in love with him from a description of him by her servant girl:

She recounted your noble air, the beauty of your person, the grace with which you managed your fiery steed, and above all the sweet and amiable expression of your countenance. The account inflamed me. (vol. II, p. 232)

Ameer falls for her, forgetting his marriage vows and his wife and almost abandoning his Thug band. Ameer, however, soon recovers his senses and confesses to the Moghulanee his married state, which provokes her to blackmail him. She threatens to expose him as a Thug if he does not go off with her. Naturally this leads to Ameer ordering her death, for "the peril we were in was so imminent, and the lives of my fifty brave fellows were so completely at the mercy of a woman, that I could not overlook the strict rules of my profession." (vol. II, p. 247) Like Feringea, Ameer helps the woman from her palanquin before his men strangle her. As an extra twist to

the tale, Ameer discovers that it was one of his own men who had betrayed the group by boasting of their deeds to the Moghulanee's servant girl, and he is duly strangled as an example to the rest of the gang.

This is not the only episode in Confessions of a Thug to be culled from Ramaseeana. There are at least seven other incidents used by Taylor, mostly in the last third of the novel. These include:

- 1) a boy on a Thug expedition dying of convulsions on seeing Thugs strangling several travellers, (Ramaseeana, vol. I, p. 149), an incident faithfully reproduced by Taylor. (vol.III, p. 139);
- 2) the Rajah of Jhalone dying of leprosy after having two Thugs trampled to death by elephants. (Ramaseeana, vol. I, p. 156.) Taylor changed the episode slightly to make it more relevant to the story: instead of two Thugs, it is Ismail, Ameer's father, who is trampled to death. (vol.III, p. 245);
- 3) the murder of Nawab Subzee Khan, a general who derived his name from the copious amounts of Subzee (a strong, intoxicating drug) he was accustomed to drinking. (Ramaseeana, vol. I, p. 240-242.) One of the more detailed incidents in Ramaseeana, it was faithfully reproduced by Taylor, who confined himself to fleshing out the scene with suitably plausible dialogue and descriptions. (vol II, p. 121-150); and
- 4) the "Shikarpore affair", which included a description of a Thug dashing out a young boy's brains against a rock, and also an attack on a group of Thugs who escape by sheltering in and receiving aid from a nearby village, in payment for which they are forced to hand

over all of their ill-gotten goods. (Ramaseeana, vol. I, p. 197-200) Taylor made much use of this episode, (vol. III, p. 172-179), and it should be noted that almost all reviewers of Ramaseeana used part of the Shikarpore affair to point to and comment extensively on the brutality and inhumanity of all Thugs and of the widespread condoning of the Thuggist cult.

These episodes form merely a small part of the long list of murders described in Confessions of a Thug. The novel flags at times because of the endless cataloguing of indistinguishable murders, which accounts perhaps for Taylor's efforts to connect his adventures and make them more interesting. Adding more exciting and memorable incidents from other sources clearly helped. It would also account for the romantic and picaresque accounts which sprinkle the work. While Confessions of a Thug did not establish a new literary tradition in Anglo-Indian works, it combined existing genres and forwent any moralising inherent in most contemporary descriptions of Thuggism.

The novel fitted in particularly well with the type of criminal dramas being written during the first half of the nineteenth century. These works, particularly the notorious "Newgate novels", tended to romanticise the criminal and his activities. The "Newgate novels" that sprang up in the 1830s and 1840s, for example, were immensely popular, and chronicled "the adventures and escapes of independent, courageous criminals, often legendary eighteenth-century robbers and highwaymen."³⁹ One nineteenth-century novelist, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, wrote two popular "Newgate" novels, Paul Clifford (1830), and Eugene Aram (1831), whose themes centred on the influences or effects

of murder on characters' fates, and it was Edward Bulwer-Lytton, we should recall, who encouraged his cousin Meadows Taylor to fictionalise Thuggism and Thuggee activities.

Confessions of a Thug has an atmosphere to it which most other nineteenth century Anglo-Indian works fail to impart as effectively. Other contemporary writers with a hazy knowledge of India and its languages were prone to use unspecific and vaguely Eastern sounding phrases to pep up their dialogue. Early British writers were also prone to describe India in a general way, portraying it as a mystical paradise full of mango trees and sparkling brooks. Taylor, in contrast, used specific phrases which, although at times flowery, strike the ear as genuine attempts to convey the manner of Indian speech. As one critic noted, Taylor reproduced the "flavour of cultured Indian conversation by using proper forms of address and oriental modes of expression."⁴⁰ Exotic phrases pepper his dialogue, such as: "We must spread the carpet of patience...and sit on it" (vol. I, p. 225), and "May the blessing of the Prophet and the twelve Imams be on you and your posterity!" (ibid, p.. 287) One scene which particularly illustrates Taylor's use of distinctive dialogue is where Ameer and his father engage a Dullal, or broker, to help sell their stolen goods. The broker cowers when they ask him to be secretive about it, thinking they are about to kill him, which provokes Ismail:

"Why," cried my father, as the fellow lay on the floor whimpering, "what is this? what chicken-hearted son of a vile woman art thou? In the name of Alla get up! Because a man who, Inshalla! is somebody, asks thee whether thou canst be secret, must thou of necessity think thou art going to have thy throat cut?....This is beyond bearing; the fellow has not the soul of a flea. Kick him out into the street,

and beat him on the mouth with a slipper: there are plenty of dullals to be found beside him." (ibid, p. 281)

This stylisation is what makes Confessions of a Thug belong, as V.S. Pritchett remarks, to "the class of saturated novel, one in which a writer has so familiarised himself with an alien material that it flows out copiously, clearly and with vigour."⁴¹ Another virtue is the absence of moral commonplaces about the true nature of Indian culture, something which could not be said of many other Anglo-Indian novels that succeeded it.

Following Confessions of a Thug, Thuggism was occasionally used in works published both in Britain and abroad. In 1845 the Frenchman, Eugene Sue, produced The Wandering Jew, one of whose main characters, transposed from India to Europe, was the Thug Feringea. Feringea had figured not only in Ramaseeana but also in Taylor's introduction to Confessions of a Thug. In 1862 Bulwer-Lytton included in his novel, A Strange Story, the character Juma the Strangler,

An Indian...of whom all the wild retainers of Grayle spoke with detestation and terror. He was believed by them to belong to that murderous sect of fanatics whose existence as a community has only recently been made known to Europe, and who strangle their unsuspecting victim in the firm belief that they propitiate the favour of the goddess they serve.⁴²

Even Charles Dickens, some critics argue, might have intended in his unfinished The Mystery of Edwin Drood to dispose of Edwin Drood by strangulation. The argument centres on John Jasper, Edwin's uncle, possibly having learned the Thug art in earlier trips to the Orient, and using a silk scarf he was in the habit of wearing to kill Edwin. John's propensity for lurking near graveyards and the references at crucial moments to animal sounds which might have served as omens

have also been taken by some as possible clues to Dickens' intentions.

References to Thuggism were not solely confined to Europe. Even across the Atlantic Thuggism could be found in such works as the 1869 novel Cord and Creese, by James de Mille, and Mark Twain's 1896 account of his travels around the world, More Tramps Abroad.

In the twentieth century Thuggism has surfaced both in literature and film. One major novel dealing with Thugs is John Masters' 1952 work The Deceivers, which was subsequently filmed in 1988. In The Deceivers Masters, an Englishman who went from working in India to writing in the United States, seeks to "recreate the 'feel' of a historical episode rather than write a minutely accurate report" on Thuggism.⁴³ This echoes Taylor, who explained that Confessions of a Thug was "not published to gratify a morbid taste in any one for tales of horror and of crime," but rather to "expose...the practices of the Thugs, and to make the public of England more conversant with the subject." (Confessions of a Thug, vol. I, p. xxiii-iv) Taylor hoped that the subject would prove more interesting as a novel than as "an account of the superstitions and customs only of the Thugs." (ibid)

Like Taylor, John Masters follows the adventures of a Thug. In a unique twist, though, the Thug is actually a British officer in disguise, who takes up their ways in order to break up the Thuggee system. It is a well written book that makes good use of nineteenth-century historical information. Masters, however, is not so ambiguous in his portrayal of Thugs as is Taylor. Master's work contains more detailed descriptions of the Thugs' supposed rituals

and ceremonies than Taylor's work, and his Thugs are more strongly influenced by religious motivations.

Thuggism has made more of an impression this century in films. The first to include Thuggism was the 1939 film Gunga Din, which featured a large dollop of pseudo-Thuggist activities: sacred pickaxes and mumbo-jumbo religious ceremonies littered the screen and Kali was frequently invoked by the film's Thugs.⁴⁴ The film's story line follows three British soldiers in India through various adventures involving much fighting and heroic acts, culminating eventually in a battle between British troops and a band of fanatical Thugs seeking to overthrow British rule. One of the film's most interesting features is the twinning of Thuggism with Indian nationalist feeling. The Thugs have been reduced to caricatures of pure evil, fanatical followers of the goddess Kali and of an equally fanatical leader, stealthily killing all who stand in their way of an India free of British rule. Thus, in this film, Indian nationalism is by implication an evil thing, advocated by groups of fanatical killers. It is part and parcel of such cliched stereotypes that in the end the British troops, marching into a trap set by the Thugs, are warned of danger by the heroic action of the good Indian of the film, Gunga Din, who gives his life in the effort.

Gunga Din was made under the shadow of World War II, a time when many film makers were producing films designed to motivate people to support the Allied effort, and more specifically the British effort against Germany. Gunga Din is an allegory of good vs. evil, the small but plucky British fighting a large and fanatical group of subversives who offer only death and destruction, and threaten the

very fabric of the British Empire. This could be interpreted in light of what was occurring in Europe at the time, and the message to Britain's allies and possessions seemed clear: nationalism and self-interest are destructive to the cause of peace (in the film's case the peace ensured by enlightened British rule in India), for which Britain was fighting.

The distortions of the Thug myths seen in Gunga Din have carried over to other films. While in 1959 Hammer Films released a soon forgotten film about Thugs, The Stranglers of Bombay, in 1956 Around the World in Eighty Days was released. It included a dramatic rescue of a virgin maiden from Thugs about to offer her as a sacrifice to Kali. More recently Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984) has featured the Thuggee cult at work. The Thugs in this film, however, bear no resemblance whatsoever to the ones described in such detail by Meadows Taylor and other nineteenth-century writers, and are at the very best extremely distant cousins of their celluloid counterparts in Gunga Din. They are very similar to the Thugs seen in Around the World in Eighty Days. The writers of Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom concoct an absurd combination of Indian, Aztec and other pagan rituals and myths and present them as part of Thuggee activities. The stranglers of India are now almost solely fanatical devotees of human sacrifice, spending much time in this film watching high priests, dressed in silk robes and wearing buffalo skulls, invoking Kali, tearing out hearts from human victims strapped into iron cages and tossing the victims into whirlpools of hot lava. When they are not doing this they are usually flogging small Indian children, whom they force to labour in mines beneath their

headquarters, the Temple mentioned in the title. In a few scenes the Thugs actually attempt some stranglings, but in general they seem content to indulge in other nefarious activities. All in all, as symbols of absolute evil, they are as sinister and dastardly as villains are expected to get.

Views of Thuggism have changed tremendously in the past two centuries. It is evident that the depiction of Thuggism changed, particularly in the nineteenth century, because of political reasons. Early accounts suggested Thuggism was purely an organised form of banditry. Nineteenth-century investigations, however, focussed on its supposed religious nature, to the extent where encyclopedic entries, as already shown, drew direct links between the development of Kali worship and the beginnings of Thuggism. Thuggism could be, and was, used to justify calls for further British involvement in the independent states suspected of harbouring Thugs, and was also used by self-righteous British expansionists and missionaries to denounce the evils of Hindu worship. Few paused to examine the economic aspects of Thuggee activities. With the successful containment of Thuggism by the late nineteenth century, it faded as a political issue, and its depiction changed accordingly. It became a byword in popular culture for a stereotyped religious cult, steeped in rituals borrowed from primitive societies in South America, Africa, and even the Orient. Much as the Wild West of American films usually included American Indians attacking trains and wagons, so too the India of popular films featured Thugs at work, strangling intruders in their jungle temples and sacrificing virgin maidens. Meadows Taylor's work

stands in contrast to such representations as one of the few singularly sympathetic accounts to be written about Thuggism.

Notes

1. "Secret Societies of Asia", Edinburgh Review, Feb 1841: 229.
2. W.H. Sleeman, Ramaseeana, Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Military Orphan Press, 1836, 79.
3. A. Lovell, transl., The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant, Hants: Gregg International Publishers, Ltd., 1971, III, 41.
4. Ibid.
5. Benedicte Hjejle, "The Social Policy of the East India Company with Regard to Sati, Slavery, Thagi and Infanticide 1772-1858," unpublished D. Phil thesis, Oxford, 281.
6. Francis Toker, The Yellow Scarf: The Story of the Life of Thuggee Sleeman, London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1961, 63.
7. James Forbes, Oriental Memoirs, London: White, Cochrane, & Co., 1813, vol. 4, 12-13.
8. Joyce Plath Kindred, "Kali: Hinduism's Terrible Mother," Solidarity, 3.7 (1968): 42.
9. Ibid.
10. Wm. Theodore DeBary, et. al., Sources of Indian Tradition: vol. 1, New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, 201.
11. Sleeman, Ramaseeana, pt. 1, 128.
12. Ibid., pt. 2, 357-358.
13. Ibid., pt. 2, 128-130.
14. Ibid., pt. 2, 155-224.
15. Ibid., pt. 1, 11.

16. James Hastings, ed., Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. XII, Edinburgh: Clark, 1922, 260.
17. Ibid.
18. Ramaseeana, pt. 1, 50-51.
19. Ibid., pt. 1, 53.
20. Ibid., pt. I, II.
21. E. Thornton, Illustration of the History and Practices of the Thugs, London: W.H. Allen, 1837, 43.
22. Ibid., 44.
23. "The Thugs; or, Secret Murderers of India," Edinburgh Review, 64.130 (Jan 1837): 374. (Burke and Hare were a pair of Irishmen who perpetrated a series of murders in 1828 to supply dissection subjects to an Edinburgh anatomist, Dr. Robert Knox. Burke was tried and convicted on the strength of Hare's confession.)
24. Richard Altick, Victorian Studies in Scarlet, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1972, 35.
25. Ramaseeana, pt. II, 309-316.
26. Ibid., pt. II, 317-323.
27. (P.M. Taylor), "On the Thugs," New Monthly Magazine, 38 (1833): 278.
28. Ibid., 285.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 287.
31. Ibid., 286.
32. The Times, Dec 26 1840: 5.
33. Tuke, The Yellow Scarf, 82; P.M. Taylor, Confessions of a Thug, London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1840, vol. III, 318.
34. Vincent Smith, ed., Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Officer by Major-General Sir W.H. Sleeman, rev. ed., Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1973, 653.
35. Taylor, Confessions of a Thug, vol. I, VII. All further quotes from confessions will have source page numbers noted in brackets in the text.
36. Sleeman, Ramaseeana, pt. I, 215.

37. Ibid., 216.
38. Ibid.
39. Beth Kalikoff, Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Popular Literature, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986, 35.
40. Bhupal Singh, A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, 43.
41. V.S. Pritchett, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, Nov 8 1941, 411.
42. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, A Strange Story, London: Sampson Low, Son & Co., 1862, vol. I, 329-330.
43. John Master, The Deceivers, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1959, 248.
44. [Thuggism does not feature at all in Kipling's poem "Gunga Din", nor in his short stories. There is evidence, though, that Kipling read Confessions of a Thug while at the United Services College at Westward Ho! Mention is made in Major-General Dunsterville's Stalky's Adventures of secret reading sessions with Kipling, in which "The Confessions of a Thug was one of the books we read aloud, and Walt Whitman we thoroughly enjoyed in the same way." (Stalky's Adventures, London: Jonathan Cape, 1941, p. 37.)]

3. TIPPOO SULTAUN: A TALE OF THE MYSORE WAR

Following the success of his first novel, Taylor was asked to write an historical romance set in the times of Tipu Sultan, the late eighteenth century Mysorean ruler. He was initially very reluctant to do so, fearing that the complexities of Mysorean history would defeat his narrative powers. "To be sure, I had travelled through Mysore, and could describe local scenery and objects," he commented in his autobiography, "but I fairly despaired of making a readable story out of Tippoo."¹ Nevertheless, he set out to do so in the winter of 1839, relying heavily on information gained not only from a personal interview with the Duke of Wellington, but also from the influential historical survey of Mysorean history published in three volumes between 1810 and 1817, Mark Wilks' Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore. The result, Tippoo Sultaun: a Tale of the Mysore War, was published in December 1840, a month after Taylor had set sail once again for India.

Taylor's work was, in essence, a sequel to an earlier novel by Sir Walter Scott, first published in 1827 as part of the second series of the Chronicles of the Canongate. Scott's novel, The Surgeon's Daughter, is a slight effort, one of the many works he churned out in an effort to write himself out of bankruptcy with the Waverley Novels. It is worth looking at, though, in order to contrast its vision of India, a reflection of many of the prevailing British

stereotypes of the time, with that of Taylor's later effort on the same subject.

There is no doubt that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the British were in the process of conquering and assuming the right to rule in the subcontinent, India was viewed, particularly in works of literature, as a paradise of great scenic beauty where alluring and exotic women and vast treasures could be possessed by those enterprising enough to find them. This perception forms part of what has been called "Orientalism", a school of thought prevalent in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century European literature. (A subject I shall deal with in my concluding chapter.) It afforded the novelist some easy points of identification and interest as many writers, such as Samuel Johnson, Thomas Moore, and William Beckford came to use the East as backdrops to some of their works.

Most of these writers had had little or no actual contact with the East. Few had ever been there, and Scott was no exception. In his introduction to The Surgeon's Daughter he unashamedly admits to knowing nothing about India and its people, but he sees in this a virtue when a friend remarks to him, "You will tell us about them all the better that you know nothing of what you are saying."² Scott's ignorance did not diminish his enthusiasm for the subject, which we learn had been sparked by reading accounts of early British imperial exploits, particularly those found in Robert Orme's late seventeenth-century survey, History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan. These works, Scott felt, demonstrated the almost superhuman qualities of the early pioneers,

who seemed "like Homer's demigods among the warring mortals." "Men," Scott continues,

like Clive and Caillaud influenced great events, like Jove himself. Inferior officers are like Mars or Neptune; and the sergeants and corporals might well pass for demigods.³

Such mythification in historical accounts no doubt helped stamp more firmly in the British imagination the image of India as a land, infinitely exotic and exciting, full of successful adventure and romance. India's appeal was further enhanced by the "nabobs", the British adventurers who returned from their journeys to live in an ostentatious style befitting their newly acquired wealth. India's appeal to adventurous spirits is acknowledged in Scott's lengthy preface, where he explains how he was urged by a friend to write about the country. The friend observes:

I think you might do with your Muse of Fiction, as you call her, as many an honest man does with his own sons in flesh and blood....Send her to India to be sure. That is the true place for a Scot to thrive in; and if you carry your story fifty years back, as there is nothing to hinder you, you will find as much shooting and stabbing there as ever was in the wild Highlands.⁴

Both The Surgeon's Daughter and Tippoo Sultaun deal with a period when trading concerns and the extraction of riches were of more concern to the British in India than the conscious building of an empire; yet a common theme in both works is that of individual men fashioning history by their actions. Scott eulogises Clive and Caillaud, and Taylor does the same for the Duke of Wellington. Both works vividly portray a period when rogues were aplenty and, as Scott's friend exclaims, "for great exploits, you have in the old history of India, before Europeans were numerous there, the most

wonderful deeds, done by the least possible means, that perhaps the annals of the world can afford."⁵

Neither writer neglects to describe in graphic detail the other, unpleasant side of military service, both in England and India. In Scott's work much detail is given to the appalling conditions of recruitment camps, like the one he describes on the Isle of Wight, where those who had signed on for the lower ranks of the East India Company army were sent prior to being shipped out to India. The Isle of Wight depot is described in nightmarish detail. It is a place where disease, theft and corruption are rampant, and where most recruits quickly turn into the breed of adventurers Scott is told by his friend to use in his Indian tale, ones who had "laid down their consciences at the Cape of Good Hope as they went out to India, and forgot to take them up again when they returned."⁶ This episode, unlike most of the others in this work, has some historical basis to it. The way in which Richard Middlemas is at first recruited and then robbed by East India Company "headhunters", who drug and forcibly transport him to the Isle of Wight depot, has, as one writer puts it, "a genuine connection with the early methods of obtaining recruits and with the use of the Island as a depot."⁷ It is a sombre start to what had been imagined as a romantic career as a soldier in India.

Taylor also sounds an initially sombre note as his English hero, Herbert Compton, arrives in India. India is described as:

The land in which many were to die -many to suffer privation and hardship, in war, in captivity, in weary sickness- from which few were destined to return except with ruined health, bronzed features, and altered tempers from those which in youth and ardent hope they now bore with them.⁸

Taylor does not spare us the hardships of a soldier's lot in India. Herbert's regiment disembarks in Bombay and finds life there distinctly uncomfortable: the roads are dusty and hot, and the streets are narrow, infested with flies and malodorous smells, "some not the most fragrant, -particularly that of fish under the process of drying...." (p. 132) The mens' first night on shore is "passed in beds but ill adapted to defy the attacks of their bitter foes the musquitoes(sic)," a circumstance recognisable to anyone who has lived in the tropics. (ibid) The gorgeous romance of the East, they find, exists only in their imagination, and quickly gives way "to the bare and dull reality of a barrack-room; not half so comfortable, they thought, as their old quarters in England, to which many of their thoughts wandered painfully." (p. 133) Early discomforts, though, are soon left behind by both Taylor and Scott. Having acknowledged the harsh reality of a soldier's lot, they quickly move on to more exciting descriptions of their heroes' adventures.

Heroic men in historical novels call for enemies of equal stature, and here the eighteenth-century Mysorean rulers Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan prove suitable for the parts, being seen as two of the most colourful and most able Indian rulers of the time. Their rule spanned less than forty years, from Haidar's rise to power in 1760 to Tipu's death in battle at Seringapatam in 1799.

Haidar Ali, born in 1721, was a commandant in the Maharajah of Mysore's army who, after overthrowing the rajah, developed Mysore into one of the strongest and most united Indian states of its time. Although illiterate, he knew a great deal about financial matters and had a keen military mind. He used both during his lifetime to extend

Mysore's borders and to create a stable revenue system that could supply the resources needed for his expansionist policies. Haidar saw to it that the main sources of income, the state's land and its produce, were well maintained. His methods were not subtle, as one commentator has noted:

Well-directed terrorism helped to keep the citizens peaceful and happy. There was an excellent standing arrangement, for example, that if a highway robbery was reported, the local police chief was immediately impaled.⁹

If Haidar Ali ruled in a rough way, this was not uncommon amongst Indian rulers of the time; yet his was not a blood-thirsty exercise in self aggrandizement. He, like Tipu who succeeded him, worked hard to administer Mysore well.

Haidar Ali died in 1782 of what many have speculated was a cancerous tumour, or carbuncle, on his back. Tipu Sultan, born about 1750, took over and proved himself just as powerful a ruler, but different in style. In matters of state Tipu was as much in control as his father, but Haidar Ali was more tolerant. He treated religious differences amongst his subjects, and the presence of the British near his state, tolerantly; Tipu did not. A devout Muslim, he felt the call to the jehad, or holy war, against all infidels. He had also grown up fighting the British and regarded them as his hereditary enemies. Four Mysore Wars were waged between the British and Mysoreans between 1767 to 1799, that is, throughout most of Tipu's life. Thus Tipu, more wary and distrustful of the British than Haidar Ali, undertook subsequent overtures to the French, ridiculed in Taylor's narrative, which were to irk the British throughout his rule.

The differences perceived by the British between father and son were soon reflected in their popular images in Britain, particularly after the battle of Pollilur in 1780, when British forces, led by Lieutenant-Colonel William Baillie, were decimated by Tipu and Haidar and many prisoners taken. The prisoners of war who survived the various dungeons of Mysore proved remarkably verbose in the decades to follow. Between 1788 and 1824 several accounts were published which helped fix the images of Haidar as a just, yet inconsistent monarch, and of Tipu, as Denys Forrest writes, as a "'sanguinary tyrant', gloomy, fanatical and cruel, the very type of Oriental despotism."¹⁰ These images were sealed and perpetuated by the influential historical survey published in three volumes between 1810 and 1817, Mark Wilks' Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore. The author, one time Resident of Mysore between 1803 and 1807, produced what was on the whole a reliable account of Mysorean history. His view of Tipu Sultan, however, was exaggerated, making him out to be little more than a cruel despot guilty of such cruelties as murdering baby elephants on hunts (an episode used in Taylor's work).

The image of Tipu as a cruel tyrant was still alive, and even heightened, in the early twentieth century. In 1937, Dennis Kincaid wrote of Tipu:

That dark squat prince whose chief amusements were designing dresses to be compulsorily worn by his female subjects, studying and interpreting dreams, and watching a mechanical lion mangle a doll dressed in European costume, would suddenly awake to a stern realisation of his duties as a Muslim sovereign and issue orders for the forcible circumcision of the Englishmen in his prisons.¹¹

While the first three points have some historical validity (Tipu did write down his interpretations of his dreams, and the mechanical lion described can now be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London), the last point is suspect. British captives were encouraged to convert to Islam, which involved a ritual circumcision, but were not compelled. That some British captives did convert was due more to the immediate benefits offered to the European convert, not the least of which was freedom from Tipu's dungeons.

In both The Surgeon's Daughter and Tippoo Sultaun, Tipu Sultan (and in Scott's work Haidar Ali as well), plays a significant if minor role as Indian antagonist. Scott's novel, set in the 1760's, centres on three British characters: Richard Middlemas, Menie Gray, and Adam Hartley. Richard, initially a cadet in the East India Company army, gets into trouble and flees the army to join the service of a native prince, where he comes into contact with Tipu Sultan, the "Tiger of Mysore". Tipu is besotted with the portrait Richard possesses of his fiance, Menie Gray, and persuades Richard to kidnap Menie from England and bring her to his court. Adam Hartley, an acquaintance of both Menie and Richard, stationed in India as a surgeon, gets wind of the plot and saves Menie by applying directly to Haidar Ali for justice. The work climaxes in a dramatic scene where Haidar confronts and chastises his son in court, and exacts rough justice for this outrage by having Richard sentenced to be crushed to death by an elephant. Soon afterwards, Adam Hartley dies of distemper, and the work closes on Menie retiring to Britain to dedicate herself to charitable work.

The images of the Mysorean rulers found in this incredible tale reflect very much their popular images in Britain. Haidar Ali is the strong father figure, erratic in government. At one point Adam Hartley is warned that Haidar Ali, while he prides himself on his just rule, is only

just by reflection, and perhaps from political considerations; but by temperament, his blood is as unruly as ever beat under a black skin, and if you do not find him in the vein of judging, he is likely enough to be in that of killing. Stakes and bowstrings are as frequently in his head as the adjustment of the scales of justice.¹²

This is a typical representation of the "good" but erratic Indian prevalent in much of nineteenth century Anglo-Indian literature. Haidar may be just, and honourable at times, but he cannot escape from an ever present flaw most British commentators saw in their subjects: that of fickleness of temperament.

Tipu Sultan comes off even worse in Scott's hands. He is a spoiled, lecherous, lascivious, monstrous child, who stocks up his zenana with European women and is not above using treachery to do so. Tipu is the sulky boy of Haidar's court who must be constantly watched and curbed by his father. This is stressed in the climactic encounter between father and son, when Haidar enters the court:

The Nawaub at length signed for silence, and was promptly obeyed. He looked majestically around him, and at length bent his look upon Tippoo, whose downcast eyes, as he stood before the throne with his arms folded on his bosom, were strongly contrasted with the haughty air of authority which he had worn but a moment before.¹³

In the end, Haidar restores Menie to Adam, but not before threatening to wipe out the British from India:

Hitherto I have been in the Carnatic as a mild Prince -in future I will be a destroying tempest! Hitherto I have made inroads as a compassionate and merciful conqueror -hereafter

I will be the messenger whom Allah sends to the kingdoms
which he visits in judgment!¹⁴

Scott's portrait deviates from the standard images by giving Haidar a vengeful character more appropriate to Tipu, perhaps in order to add a moment of high drama to the waning plot.

The plot of Tippoo Sultaun is more complex, and the image of Tipu Sultan also different. The novel traces the adventures in India of two protagonists (one Indian, the other British), between 1780 and 1799, that is, during the most turbulent period of conflict between the British and Tipu Sultan. Kasim Ali, son of an Indian patel, or village chief, saves the life of Ameena, the third wife of Ali Khan, an important commander in Tipu's army. In gratitude, the Khan offers him employment, and soon Kasim is raised to an important position under Tipu's personal command. Kasim distinguishes himself by saving Tipu's life several times and by fighting well in various battles, but towards the end of the work he defects to the British, disgusted with Tipu's cruelty, intolerance and aberrancies, just in time to witness Tipu's death at the battle of Seringapatam in 1799. The other protagonist, Herbert Compton, equally distinguishes himself, but in British military service. Having purchased a commission as an officer in a British regiment, he is shipped out to India in 1781 and soon rises to become aide-de-camp to Brigadier-General Mathews. Captured at the battle of Bednur in 1782, Herbert refuses to join Tipu's side and subsequently spends seventeen years languishing in Mysorean prisons, until Tipu's death signals his release and return to Britain and to his everfaithful fiance, Amy Hayward. Taylor was obviously determined to finish the work romantically, as he rarely

seems to have considered the implausibility of Amy waiting over eighteen years for the return of her loved one.

In Tippoo Sultaun Taylor exploits a plot formula common to many of Walter Scott's novels, including to a certain extent The Surgeon's Daughter. This, in the words of one critic, involves "the use of a relatively unknown young man from a good background whose experience in life is limited but who suddenly finds himself in a position of importance at a crucial juncture in some historical happening."¹⁵ Both Kasim Ali and Herbert Compton are typical examples of this. Each one is given an active part in major battles and engagements, and both are placed in positions important enough to allow Taylor to highlight the actions of major historical characters who otherwise play minor roles in the work. For the most part we see these historical characters such as Tipu and Mathews only in the context of their effect on the protagonists.

Our first glimpse of Tipu is through Kasim's eyes. Kasim has heard much of Tipu's prowess through his benefactor, the Khan, but his initial encounter with the "Tiger of Mysore" is inauspicious. As the Khan's entourage enters Tipu's capital, they find Tipu killing a defenseless bull in the town bazaar, and then having Brahmins, to whom the animal is sacred, smeared with the animal's blood. Naturally Kasim's initial impression is one of disgust at the wanton cruelty of the act, and the reader is invited to respond similarly. These episodes mount in frequency to give an overall impression, only infrequently relieved, of Tipu as an erratic ruler, one moment inspiring, the next cruel and erratic, who degenerates as the novel progresses. Taylor suggests this degeneration early on in a

description of Tipu in his court. Amidst a dignified description of the Sultan in all his finery, Taylor throws in a suggestion of Tipu's unstable character by describing his eyes as having a "restless and suspicious expression," bespeaking "a mind of perpetual but not profound thought." (p. 188)

Tipu is often shown giving way to blood lust against animals, cruelly hunting both bulls and elephants. Much prominence is given to a scene in which Tipu captures an elephant calf and has it tied down, "while its innocent face and tremblings expressed terror most strongly," before its decapitation. (p. 255) Tipu's cruelty here is compounded by his "most dangerous passion, bigotry," as he forces a Hindu to strike several blows against the defenseless creature. (p.256)

The same bigotry is duly emphasised in several other scenes involving forced conversions of captured enemies, and Tipu's men are incited whenever possible to plunder and pillage infidel strongholds. These incidents are invariably the result of Tipu's interpretation of recent dreams, which are presented by Taylor as yet more signs of his degenerate character. One of Taylor's contemporaries perceptively noted a plausible, political cause for this darkening portrait, declaring:

Tippoo Sultaun, though not pourtrayed(sic) by Captain Taylor as the monster, with whom it was the fashion some fifty years ago to terrify old women and children, is yet drawn with darker shades than reality will justify, in order that his overthrow, an act of questionable policy, may appear a measure of substantial justice.¹⁶

And yet Taylor gives Tipu more credit for his leadership qualities than does Scott. Towards the end of the work, Kasim, the Indian

hero, delivers a final estimation of Tipu's importance to India.

Asked to explain what he saw in his former leader, Kasim exclaims:

He was a great man -such an (sic) one as Hind will never see again. He had great ambition, wonderful ability, perseverance, and the art of leading men's hearts more than they were aware of, or cared to acknowledge; he had patient application, and nothing was done without his sanction, even to the meanest affairs, and the business of his dominions was vast. You will allow he was brave, and died like a soldier. He was kind and considerate to his servants, and a steady friend to those he love. Mashalla! he was a great man. (p. 450)

But this description is intended more to illustrate Kasim's magnanimity than the features of Tipu. It is Kasim who is seen as a truly great man, if only as one of the Indian heroes Taylor is fond of using in his works. Kasim displays the usual heroic characteristics: not only is he well built, courteous, well read and a good fighter, but, most importantly, he has fair skin, "far fairer than the generality of his countrymen could boast," which demonstrates that he is "perhaps of gentle blood, which indeed his courteous manner would have inclined most observers to determine." (p. 16) This is not the last time we see Taylor emphasise the fair skin of his Indian protagonists. The hero and heroine of a later work Tara, are also of fair skin, as is the heroine of Seeta.

It is interesting that Taylor's idealised Indian characters are without fail fairer in skin than most of their countrymen and women. The emphasis illustrates a widespread contemporary racial view that, among other things, equated varying degrees of purity in character and nature with varying shades of skin colour. This was one of the theories on racial differences that was also to mark such pseudo-scientific movements as Social Darwinism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The assumption was often drawn, based on the

supposed racial superiority of white Europeans, that the purity of one's character correlated with the fairness, or darkness, of one's skin. Thus the light skin colour of Taylor's Indian protagonists allowed the reader to assume they were less tainted in nature than their darker skinned compatriots. It also made them less alien by casting them more in line with the European ideal of beauty: fair-skin, high cheek bones and light bone structure.

A unique point of Tippoo Sultaun is Taylor's comparison and contrast of his Indian and British protagonists. Kasim Ali and Herbert Compton share similar characteristics and concerns which are still, of course, contained within and modified by racial differences. Both display equal skill in combat and diplomacy, to which are added a sensitivity to art and literature. While Kasim is well versed in the masterpieces of ancient Indian literature, able to quote lyrical passages for the delectation of his benefactor, Herbert is as steeped in the classics of art. Neither is indifferent to the beauty of landscape, a favourite concern of Taylor's, although Kasim's interest is given a racialist context. At one point Kasim wanders out in the night to contemplate the moonlight, and sees a view which softens his heart, "in spite of his habitual indifference to such scenes -an indifference common to all his countrymen." (p. 21) But Taylor immediately qualifies this remark by suggesting that Indians, although indifferent to much of nature, are especially susceptible to moonlight. "The natives of India," Taylor writes, "are perhaps heedless of natural beauties, but if there be any to which they are not indifferent, it is those of the glorious moonlights which are seen in the East, so unlike those of any other country."

(ibid) The dreamy quality of the moon's rays, Taylor continues, "so inviting to quiet contemplation," and so refreshing after a day under the intense heat of the sun, are so irresistible that "it is no wonder if the majority of Asiatics, both Mahomedans and Hindoos, should love it beyond the day, or appreciate more keenly the beauties it reveals." (ibid) This seems to tie in well with the concept of the East as a place of romance, where the light of the moon moves its inhabitants more than the colours of the day.

Herbert's appreciation of nature does not have to be embedded in any such racial categorisations, but it is sufficiently different to suggest points of racial distinction. He is more susceptible to natural beauty seen by daylight, particularly in Britain, where its influence would

have caused him to stop more than once to admire for the hundredth time some noble avenues of beech and oak -some picturesquely-grouped herd of deer or flock of sheep, or some exquisite effect of light and shade as the soft floating clouds transiently caused it. (p. 65)

Thus Kasim and Herbert, although both moved by nature, are distinctly contained within a racial framework.

Racial distinctions do not seem to be evident, though, in the descriptions of the effects Kasim's and Herbert's departures from home have on their respective mothers. Both mothers express much grief and shed many tears when the protagonists depart, and these passages are remarkably similar. Both strain for a last glimpse of their loved sons, and both feel equally affected by the experience. Kasim's mother cries on his disappearance over the horizon and afterwards, "hastily retreating into her now lonely and cheerless abode, for the while gave herself up to that violent grief which she

had been ill able to repress as he left her." (p. 36) Likewise Herbert's mother is unable to speak on his departure, and as he leaves she stands watching from the window, "with eyes dim with weeping and now almost blinded by her tears," only collapsing when she no longer has him in sight. (p. 85) Unlike Kasim's mother, though, she actually faints, which suggests that Taylor wishes the reader to see Indian mothers as perhaps more sturdy emotionally, less governed by sentiment, than their British counterparts.

British character proves sounder though, and in the end Kasim acknowledges the fine qualities of his British acquaintances. This occurs only after several months of observation. Initially Kasim is not a believer in British honour and honest character. This is only established when he is taken prisoner by the British after being wounded in battle. He is treated kindly and honourably, his wounds are bound, and he is well taken care of. Kasim quickly revises his opinions on the British on comparing the probable fate of British captives in Indian hands with his own treatment:

How little he had expected such kindness! And when he contrasted it with what would have been an Englishman's fate within the Fort, his heart was softened from the bigotry it had previously entertained. (p. 405-406)

Kasim grows to love the British, and in the end confesses his change in attitude to a British acquaintance. "[I]f any one...had told me that I should have loved Englishmen, I would have quarrelled with him even to bloodshed; and now I should be unhappy indeed if I carried not away your esteem." (p. 455) Not only do the British change his opinion about them, they also change his opinions about India. Through contact with the British, Kasim soon sees a need for an alteration of some Indian customs, such as polygamy. On one occasion

he gains warm approval from his British acquaintances when he denounces the polygamous nature of his fellow Indians. "I am content sirs," he announces, "with one wife, and I wish to Alla that all my countrymen were so too; for I am well assured that to one alone can a man give all his love, and that where more than one is, there ensue those jealousies, envies, wild passions, evil, and sin, which were well-nigh fatal to my Ameena." (p. 454-455)

Taylor at least has enough of a grasp of Indian culture to present it with some verisimilitude, which cannot be said for Walter Scott's effort. The India we see in Scott's novel is quite noticeably a backdrop against which to play out the plot. It is a mixture of little fact and much fiction, Scott having relied on an acquaintance for his information. The pseudonymous narrator, Mr. Croftangery, explains this in the conclusion when asked how he managed to write of a place he knew nothing about. "I have composed," he utters apologetically, "my shawl by incorporating into the woof a little Thibet wool, which my excellent friend and neighbour, Colonel Mackerris, one of the best fellows who ever trode(sic) a Highland moor, or dived into an Indian jungle, had the goodness to supply me with."¹⁷ This wool is occasionally used with great effect, one or two vignettes standing out amidst the general weakness of the storyline. Thus an encounter with a man in the jungle seated on the skin of a tiger serves to introduce a short but thrilling sketch of the man's tragic story: travelling through the forest prior to his marriage, the man's betrothed is killed by a tiger; the fellow wreaks vengeance, killing the animal with "such a blow over the neck as desperation itself could alone have discharged."¹⁸ It is quite an

exciting episode, and Scott manages it well, but even here there is a conspicuous lack of identity with India: there is much action but little description of the area of the encounter. The most specific Scott gets is in describing how, after the attack on the bride, "the long grass and reeds of the jungle were moving like the ripple of the ocean, when distorted by the course of a shark holding its way near the surface."¹⁹ It is a nice metaphor, but merely decorative, not suggestive or significant; for the fact remains that his landscapes are not very convincing. The frame upon which he hangs his "Thibet wool" is decidedly rickety, as he burdens his reader with hazy descriptions of dark jungles and luxurious gardens. The favoured vegetation in the work is the mango tree. Scott equally favours vaguely Eastern domes and arches for his buildings. The following short passage illustrates the most specific description of Indian landscape and architecture in the novel:

Hartley entered without farther opposition, and was now in a grove of mango-trees, through which an infant moon was twinkling faintly amid the murmur of waters, the sweet song of the nightingale, and the odours of the rose, yellow jasmine, orange and citron flowers, and Persian narcissus. Huge domes and arches, which were seen imperfectly in the quivering light, seemed to intimate the neighbourhood of some sacred edifice, where the Fakir had doubtless taken up his residence.²⁰

It illustrates the prevailing romantic, literary view of Asia during and preceding Scott's time. In Taylor's work, thirteen years later, such descriptions are found only in the dreams of his characters, such as Herbert Compton, who dreams

a feverish vision of palaces amidst gardens, where the graceful palm-tree and acacia waved over fountains which played unceasingly, and threw up a soft and almost noiseless spray into the air, and where he wandered amidst forms clad in such oriental garbs as his fancy supplied, gorgeous and dazzling with gold and gems. (p. 126)

The reality of India, though, proves less idyllic and, under the strong writing of Taylor, more pronounced. Taylor emphasises the play of colour on the Indian landscape throughout his narrative, and the description of the sunrise over the Indian coastline near Bombay is typical of his work:

The joyous day grew into being rapidly; hues of golden, of crimson, flashed upwards, and spread themselves over the sky, revealing by degrees the long and broken line of mountains, which, in parts obscured by the mists floating upon them, and again clear and sharp against the brilliant sky, continued as far as the eye could reach from north to south. Light mists covered the coast and the foot of the mountains, and concealed both from their longing gaze; but as the sun arose in dazzling brilliancy, and the red blush of his morning beams rested upon the ships, the sea, the mountain peaks and naked precipices, the clouds seemed gradually to rise from their slumber, until, broken by his power, they floated upwards slowly, as if nature were purposely lifting her veil from the scene and revealing her beauties by degrees. (p. 127)

What can be seen in all of Taylor's works is his attention to colour. His descriptions of India are like paintings full of colour and detail. This point is rather pertinent, since Taylor dedicated much time and interest throughout his career in India to sketching and painting Indian landscapes. A glance at the sketches and articles he published on Indian scenery and architecture reveal a keen appreciation of detail. All the intricacies of various buildings encountered in the Deccan, for example, are accurately recreated and detailed in his 1837 work Sketches in the Deccan.

This does not mean Taylor neglects describing India's effect on his characters. In Tippoo Sultaun there is great emphasis placed on the effect of mountain scenery on the English hero, Herbert Compton. Herbert, taken prisoner by Tippoo Sultaun and sentenced to imprisonment in a mountain fort for refusal to collaborate with the

Mysoreans, is overcome by deep, emotional longings for England while being transported over Indian mountainsides containing familiar English flora. Tippoo Sultaun is the only novel in which we see one of Taylor's English heroes bursting into tears on sighting ferns, brambles, strawberries and violets! It is a woodbine, "The same, and as fragrant, as in England," that ultimately causes a very un-British breakdown:

Herbert's heart was already full to overflowing, and thoughts of the past increased by these simple objects were too powerful for him to bear calmly; he could resist nature's best relief no longer, and wept -tears which soothed him as they flowed. And while he sate(sic) down, and with dim and streaming eyes gazed over the almost boundless prospect, he felt that if he could have passed away to another existence with those feelings, it would have been bliss. (p. 221)

Herbert is condemned to spend his days in surroundings that remind him of home. Ultimately he attempts an escape, through the help of a friendly Indian guard. Our hero, however, is an unusual escapee in that he cannot resist stopping every so often to pick flowers, "the flowers of his own England." Soon his arms are full of "woodbine and wild rose, archis and wild hyacinth, and the graceful cyclamen, and fern and violets; and the more familiar buttercup and wild anemone." (p. 345) His guide, perplexed, asks him why he does this, and Herbert explains: "These are the flowers of my own land, and I take them to my comrades; thou dost not know -thou canst not feel how dearly such things are prized in a distant land- bringing with them, as they do, remembrances of past time, and of those who shared it." (p. 346)

Here Taylor touches, rather implausibly in the circumstances, on a feeling echoed by many of his fellow expatriates in India: homesickness. Those who came out to India often sought reminders of

the country they had left; India to them was only a temporary home. They set about recreating a sense of Britain in their settlements, attached to but distinctly separate from Indian villages, and in the summer they flocked to the cooler stations in the Hills. Hill stations like Simla, Mussourie, Naini Tal and Darjeeling, built up in the nineteenth century for this purpose, provided "a brief escape from the extremes of India's climate and culture," as well as a place where familiar British comforts and surroundings could be found and enjoyed.²¹ On arriving at such a hill station one would find "a jumble of houses of every imaginable semi-suburban British kind perched on the top of a ridge," each with

A sort of English feeling about them. The smell was English, the houses were furnished in a much more English kind of way and there were fires in the evenings.²²

Through Herbert Compton, Taylor gives expression to expatriate longings for Britain not unique or confined to his contemporaries. Yet it is this nostalgia which mars the sections of Tippoo Sultaun set in England. Taylor's English landscape lack the same colour, crispness and attention to detail that mark his Indian landscapes. Compare, for example, the passage quoted earlier (on page 88), describing the sunrise over the Bombay coastline, with a passage describing an English sunrise:

The morrow came -a bright and joyous day, on which the spirit of beauty and of love revelled in every natural creation, and was abroad over the whole earth,- a day of dreamy, voluptuous repose, when one feels only fitted to hold silent converse with nature in intense admiration of the glorious perfection of her works. ---The sun was almost overpoweringly bright, and the world abroad rejoiced in his beams. (p. 79)

This is a vague and mawkish passage, poor in detail compared to Taylor's vision of Indian sunrises. Aside from the sun being bright,

we get no sense of place or detail: this could be a sunrise anywhere in the world. The whole thing is cloaked in sentimentality, and this is what undermines and weakens the English settings of the work. Possibly Taylor's own nostalgia gets in the way: the English scenery in Tippoo Sultaun is rather idyllic, full of undulating hills and pastoral delights. The English parks for example, are full of cowslips, daisies, buttercups and wild anemones that "have opened their bright blossoms to the sunlight, and are wooing it in silent thankfulness." (p. 69) They exist in an arcadian setting where

the sheep and lambs, dotted here and there upon every slope, lazily cropped the short, soft herbage; and the tinkling of their bells and the faint bleating of the lambs, now distant, now near, mingled with the hum of the many bees which busily drew their loads of sweets, roaming from flower to flower. (p. 69)

These images pale besides the more colourful views of Indian plains and skies etched in later passages.

These differences between Indian and English landscapes in Tippoo Sultaun echo the differences between Scott's vague and romantic version of India and Taylor's more dynamic view. Both authors, however, deal well with action sequences. There is a sense of excitement in both works which are the trademarks of the genre of historical romances Scott was creating and Taylor was imitating.

What should ultimately be kept in mind, though, is the differing concerns of the authors. Taylor and Scott both deal with the period of conquest in India, rather than of rule. Scott, however, writing in 1827, is quite clearly more caught up with this period of conquest (the first phase of which was over only by about 1818) than is Taylor. Living in a period when news from overseas still took a long

time to arrive in Britain, and the British struggle for India still seemed to be in the balance, Scott injects a note of uncertainty into his work: the final speech from Haidar Ali, threatening to wipe out the foreigners in his land, implies that the final outcome in India is far from decided.

Taylor, however, is different. Writing in 1839-40, by which time British rule is clearly and firmly embedded in India, and writing out of a personal knowledge of India (no need to wait for news from abroad), Taylor can suppose that the conquest is a "fact" of history. This, then, underlies his attempt to make his Indian protagonist, Kasim Ali, for example, endorse the wisdom of British rule, and the future benefits presumably resulting from the establishment of British paramountcy.

The development of the British bureaucracy in India might also explain the use of eighteenth-century India as the backdrop to Tippoo Sultaun. With British interests in and dominance of the Indian subcontinent no longer in question, problems in India were now more often bureaucratic and administrative rather than military in nature. Action and romance were no longer the bywords of those coming to India; instead duty, honour, and Christianity were on the lips and in the hearts of many venturing to Indian shores. Historical romances could accommodate such sentiments in their pages, but they needed a suitably exciting backdrop from which to launch forth. This was most easily obtained by looking back at eighteenth-century turbulences in India, thus Taylor's publisher's insistence on a Mysorean theme for his second novel.

Notes

1. Philip Meadows Taylor, The Story of my Life, 2nd ed., London & Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1878, 108-109.
2. Sir Walter Scott, The Surgeon's Daughter Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1879, 179.
3. Ibid., 178-79.
4. Ibid., 178.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Dennys Forrest, Tiger of Mysore: the Life and Death of Tipu Sultan, London: Chatto & Windus, 1970, 324.
8. Philip Meadows Taylor, Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War, 2nd ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880, 124.
9. Forrest, 52.
10. Forrest, 45.
11. Dennis Kincaid, British Social Life in India, 1608-1937, 2nd ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1973, 89.
12. Scott, 394.
13. Scott, 423.
14. Scott, 428.
15. James C. Simmons, "Philip Meadows Taylor and the Anglo-Indian Novel with a Check List of His Writings," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 75 (1971): 157-58.
16. The Athenaeum, #691, Jan. 23 1841: 73.
17. Scott, 435.
18. Ibid., 410.
19. Ibid., 399.
20. Ibid., 407.
21. Charles Allen, ed., Plain Tales From the Hills, London: Futura Publications, Ltd., 1977, 153.
22. Quoted in Plain Tales from the Hills, 153.

4. TARA: A MAHRATTA TALE

Meadows Taylor was struck by the thought that intervals of 100 years seemingly separated major historical events in India. He came to see Tara as the first in a planned trilogy of novels to be written to illustrate the three events Taylor had in mind: 1) the rise of a united Maratha challenge to Mughal authority over North India under the guidance of the Marathan leader Sivaji in the late 1650's; 2) the beginning of British dominance in India signalled by the battle at Plassey in 1757; and 3) the repercussions of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. These events were eventually described in Tara, Ralph Darnell and Seeta respectively.

The plot of Tara is carefully planned, as one would expect from a work twenty years in the making. Taylor employs a plot structure similar to that of his earlier work Tippoo Sultaun, interweaving seemingly unconnected plot strands and mingling historical figures with minor fictional characters. The fictional characters are used to highlight the period by placing them at the periphery of major historical moments: their actions usually dovetail neatly into major historical events and with those of various historical characters.

The novel is set in the Deccan region of India in 1657, during a particularly critical moment in Indian history. The Mughal Empire, which had been founded on the conquests of the Turkish Muslim chief Babur over the Rajputs in North India in the 1520s, was now facing

the threat of the Marathas in Central India, under the command of the charismatic leader Sivaji.

The Mughal Empire had expanded, from a base in the northern territories near the border of present day Afghanistan, to encompass more than half of India by the end of the seventeenth century. The Mughal Empire was developed most fully by Akbar (1542-1605), perhaps the most gifted and renowned of the Mughal Emperors, who has been labelled by some as one of two Indian statesmen of world rank seen before the twentieth century.¹ Akbar developed an efficient and centralised system of government and, though himself a Muslim, encouraged the increased participation and elevation of Hindus in his court and government. Through these and other measures Akbar provided India, as Percival Spear notes, "with the first Muslim dynasty to receive the free allegiance of Hindus as well as Muslims and whose claim to rule was accepted for reasons other than the possession of superior force."² The centralised governmental structure implemented by Akbar was maintained and augmented by his successors after his death in 1605, and survived in a reduced form well into the nineteenth century to form the base on which the British government in India organised its own local bureaucratic system.

Akbar's successors engaged in extensive and costly struggles to annex the Empire's neighbouring states, most of which were independent Muslim states in central and south India. Chief among them were the states of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda, which were eventually subdued after much struggle around 1632, 1686 and 1687 respectively. To add to the turbulence, the Mughals also had to

contend with the strong presence of the Marathan power, emerging in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The shifting and inconstant alliances between the Mughals, the independent states, and the emerging Marathan power were a particularly marked feature of the period in which the novel is set. The Marathan leader Sivaji (1627-1680), was adept at using alliances with the different powers to further his own plans, although some of these associations were forced upon him by circumstance rather than by design. In 1646, at the age of nineteen, he began a campaign of guerrilla warfare by which he and his followers soon occupied a series of mountaintop fortresses around Poona, which caused much concern in the neighbouring state of Bijapur. In 1649 Sivaji's father, Shahji, was imprisoned by the Bijapur ruler in hopes of blackmailing Sivaji into stopping his incursions. During the four years of his father's imprisonment, Sivaji ceased his raids, devoting his time instead to reinforcing the hill fortresses under his control and to strengthening his forces.

After Shahji's release in 1653 Sivaji began anew his campaign of harassing and taking over areas under Bijapur control. As a consequence various attempts were made to capture or assassinate Sivaji, but none was resolute enough or on a large enough scale, since the Bijapur kingdom now was also facing a more serious threat from the Mughals. In 1657 Aurungzebe, Akbar's great-grandson, spearheaded a successful invasion of Bijapur territory in an effort to annex it, but he was forced to halt soon afterwards to concentrate on winning the power struggle then in progress for the Mughal throne. The hasty peace treaty signed in 1658 between the Mughals and Bijapur

allowed the Bijapur sultan, Ali Adil Shah II (ruler from 1656-1672), to concentrate his full energy on the Marathan threat. In 1659 one of Bijapur's most able generals, Afzul Khan, was sent with several thousand men to capture Sivaji. On a circuitous route to Sivaji's headquarters in Pratapgarh, a small hill fort about 150 miles south of Bombay, Afzul Khan, according to James Grant Duff, Takakhav and other Indian sources, desecrated Hindu temples at Tuljapur and Mankeshwar, thus firing the Marathans with a strong desire for revenge. Upon Afzul's arrival near Pratapgarh, Sivaji sent word he wished to meet to discuss possible terms of surrender. At the meeting, which was to become legendary and establish Sivaji's fame in years to come, Sivaji killed Afzul Khan with a small dagger in one hand and a set of razor sharp "tigers' claws" attached to the fingers of the other. His men then ambushed and decimated Afzul's army, a move which ended any serious attempts thereafter by the independent states to challenge Sivaji. This marked the true beginning of Marathan dominance in the region, which was only curtailed late in the century by Mughal victories over Sivaji's successors.

It is against this historical background that Tara takes place. It is no wonder that contemporary readers found it difficult to follow the twisting and turnings of the novel as it threaded through this turbulent historical period.

Tara opens with a description of the Hindu household of Vyas Shastree, the chief priest at the Tuljapur temple, and father of Tara, a virgin widow. Tara, committed to serving the temple goddess, is kidnapped by one of Sivaji's Marathan agents, Moro Trimmul, during Afzul Khan's desecration of Tuljapur. Afzul's son Fazil Khan rescues

her and, naturally, her sweet demeanour quickly attracts his attentions. Soon, despite the religious barrier between them, Fazil is in love with her. Unfortunately, events interfere with the budding romance. Afzul Khan is murdered at Pratapgarh, though his son manages to escape the subsequent ambush. Tara, however, is once more abducted by Moro, and in order to save herself from him she prepares to commit suttee. The flames lick her feet before Fazil comes riding in to her rescue. Moro is killed during the rescue mission. Tara converts to Islam and the work satisfactorily concludes with the double marriage of Fazil to Tara and Zyna, daughter of Afzul Khan, to Khowas Khan, son of the Bijapur minister.

Tara is very much in the style of Scott, a point which did not escape the attention of early reviewers. One recent critic, however, disagrees, claiming:

In their breathtaking rapidity of action and incident Taylor's novels are more like Dumas' vigorous narratives than like Scott's.³ We race like a gale or romp like a colt through his pages.

Taylor's publisher, John Blackwood, on the other hand, did not see it this way. In an early letter to Taylor, for example, he noted how Tara had "a flavour of Ivanhoe," particularly in speeches made by characters going off to battle.⁴ He also drew attention to the success of one of the minor characters in the work, the freebooter Pahar Singh. Pahar Singh is one of the best developed characters in the novel, recalling the lively and sympathetic characterisation of Ameer Ali in Confessions of a Thug, and the similarities extend even to their trade, as there are hints throughout the work that Pahar Singh is not only a freebooter but also a Thug; Thug phrases creep

into his speech and his gang members know the best spots to rob travellers and seem strangely adept at strangling.

The scenes involving Pahar are well drawn, and the section where Pahar meets the king of Bijapur is particularly good. Pahar's men capture an envoy holding letters with damaging information concerning the treachery of the Vizier of Bijapur. Pahar negotiates a meeting with the Bijapurian sovereign, and promises the envoy a share of the money he hopes to receive from the ruler for the papers. The encounter is vividly written, and the dialogue particularly strong and humorous. At one point Pahar Singh questions the envoy regarding the papers. "Where did you get those papers, O Toolsee Das?" he asks:

"What, hast thou been asleep? Tell me again, lest I make a mistake."

"Not I, please your Highness," replied the person addressed, raising himself upon his arm; "but if you talk in that gibberish language of your country, what am I to do? It is dull work waiting when one's eyes are heavy with sleep, and I am not rested from that fearful ride."⁵

The king arrives for the meeting and the gold is exchanged for the documents. On receiving the gold, however, Pahar pockets most of it instead, calling to mind a similar scene in Ivanhoe, as John Blackwood, Taylor's publisher, remarked upon reading the work. When queried by Taylor as to what specific scene he thought it resembled, Mr. Blackwood explained:

My allusion to Ivanhoe was in regard to the scene where the robber chief doles out the pittance to Lall Sing as resembling the famous scene where Old Isaac of York pockets the full weighted zechines instead of giving them to Gurth. (BP, Acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 399.)

Taylor denied having consciously used Ivanhoe: "I have not read the Tale since I was a boy," he wrote, "but I remember no payment of

money." (BP, MS. 4186, f. 100, May 5 1863) Nevertheless the resemblance is there. Isaac receives the money and Scott writes:

The Jew's hand trembled for joy as he wrapped up the first seventy pieces of gold. The last ten he told over with much deliberation, pausing, and saying something as he took each piece from the table, and dropt (sic) it into his purse.⁶

Similarly, Pahar Singh

sat with the gold coins before him, counting them one by one. A large portion were already laid on one side, which he proceeded to drop into the bag.

To my mind the stirring descriptions of battles and scenery in Tara do seem like those in Ivanhoe, interspersed with similarly amusing and striking views of household life. And like Scott's best works, the plot in Tara is carefully worked out, the narrative flowing particularly well towards the final climactic rescue of the heroine from a painful death through immolation by fire.

Tara's main weakness is its dialogue. With a few exceptions, such as the Pahar Singh sequences, most passages are unconvincing and stilted. The language used reminds one of bad nineteenth century stage melodramas, and the opening passage of the work is a case in point:

"Tara, O Tara! where art thou?"

"Mother, I am here. Is it time?"

"Yes; we should go with the offerings to the temple. Come, thy father hath long been gone, and it will be broad day ere we can reach it." (p. 1)

This is a particularly lame way of introducing the heroine and the work. One can almost picture the mother calling for her daughter with anxious face and clasped hands. Our overall impression of Tara is not enhanced by subsequent exclamations. Later Tara's father must

decide on her future after the death of her child-husband. "Do with me as thou wilt, O father," she says,

"what is good to thee is best for me; but do not risk anything of thy honoured name for one so hopeless as I am. Why should I be a mockery to myself? It may cost me a pang to part with all these;" and she would pass her hand through those long glossy, curling tresses; "and ye too will grieve to see them gone, and your poor Tara shaved and degraded; but there is no help for it, and the honour of your house is more to your daughter than these ornaments. Without them I should be a comfort to ye, and at peace with the world and with myself; with them, only a source of disgrace and calumny, and I were better dead." (p. 12-13)

The problem is not with Taylor's use of such old-fashioned words such as "thee", "thou", "hath", or "ye". Taylor uses this stilted form of address in most of his works, mainly as a means of expressing in English the antiquity of the Indian language. It is a way of "dressing up" the language, of making it foreign but not inaccessible to his readers. And in a novel set in the seventeenth century Taylor could be justified in making the work seem even more authentic by using contemporary modes of speech. In Tara, though, the effect is unconvincing, mainly because of the flatness of the dialogue used in domestic scenes and in characterising Tara. Taylor has difficulty writing dialogue for static scenes, for example those involving the Vyas Shastree's household. The dialogue enlivens these domestic scenes only when used for comical effect. It is used quite well, for example, to characterise Afzul Khan's second wife, the lady Lurlee, a woman whose every move is charted by consulting astrological tables, but who never seems to get the signs right. At one point she explains to her step-daughter why she and Afzul have had no children yet, with quite humorous effect:

Well, it is God's will, daughter; and though I could never understand it properly, there was something wrong in the horoscope which they cast when I was betrothed. You see,

Zyna, my planet was then Mars, which represented water -no, it was fire;--no, that's a male planet, and so it must have been Earth. Yes, I think it was--Earth; and then he was Venus--no, that could not be either; it must have been Saturn, and that's for air. So you see, fire and air--no, let me see--air and water? no. What did I tell thee, Zyna? Was it Earth? (p. 226)

She becomes so muddled she ends up burning Afzul's dinner, and her anger grows greater when she hears Afzul has been detained on business at the court. When Zyna remarks that she shouldn't worry too much about the burnt food, Lurlee reacts as one might imagine an irritated cook and worried wife would:

Not care, child? and would it not have been the same had it been, as it was, dressed like food for the Peris? would it not have been the same? Would he have come to eat it? he, thy father? Why order it? Why affront me by leaving it here to be spoiled? why did he not come long ago? This is not as it used to be of old. O, Afzool Khan! am I less than dirt in thine eyes? am I--I--I-- (p. 227)

At this point Lurlee breaks down and cries, and Taylor writes an extremely moving passage explicating the sudden outburst:

It was difficult to say, perhaps, what had most particularly affected her; but undoubtedly the burning of the kicheri was at the bottom of all. It had been so good. Then she knew how his face would have expanded under its influence as he ate; it would have reminded him of some old scene, whose history would have come out between the mouthfuls -he might even have caressed her. Ah, all was now gone -her trouble, her expectations of a loving greeting, all gone: and the sense of neglect and indifference under which she habitually existed, had for the time taken its place. (p. 228)

There is a certain fluidity in the language here which unfortunately is not seen in many other domestic scenes elsewhere in the work. When Taylor is not consciously stylising the dialogue with stilted anachronisms, he creates some extremely effective characterisations and images.

The most striking aspect of Tara is its portrayal of Indian life, character, customs, and scenery. In his letters to John Blackwood, quoted earlier, Taylor explained how he hoped with Tara to engender a "new phase of illustrative fiction," presumably one that would create a sympathetic understanding of India and its people among British readers. Taylor was no doubt hoping to capitalise on the wave of interest in "Oriental" tales and works which manifested in the early nineteenth century. Works like William Beckford's Vathek, published in English in 1786, Robert Southey's The Curse of Kehama, published in 1810, and Thomas Moore's Lallah Rookh, published in 1817, all explored the "gorgeous mysteries" of the East in their own fashion. Taylor's earlier work Confessions of a Thug no doubt drew some of its success from this wave of Western fascination. But such interest soon evaporated, particularly in the wake of the 1857 Indian Mutiny, and by the 1860's the critics and the reading public were no longer interested for the most part in reading works in which there were no British characters to identify with.

It is not surprising, then, that Tara, although admired by many, was indifferently received. Following the Mutiny of 1857, British views on the Indian character were for the most part extremely negative. Post Mutiny evaluations of Indian character were shot throughout with, at best, condescending explanations of the "native's" propensity for cheating, lying, stealing, and deceiving, and of the general untrustworthiness of the Hindus and the fanaticism of the Muslims, a theme which I will deal with in a later chapter.

These perceptions of the native were often accompanied by a feeling among Anglo-Indians that ultimately India and its people were

mysteries incapable of being comprehended by the British. There was also the fear that in trying to fathom them one was in danger of losing one's own identity. This view, that ultimately the British were better off keeping to their "splendid isolation", pervaded late nineteenth-century thoughts on India, and lingered on well into the twentieth century. It is seen in many of Kipling's stories, and even in 1923 one could find the old hand advising the newcomer of the futility of comprehending India. "You'll never understand the dark and tortuous minds of the natives," the newcomer is told, "and if you do I shan't like you -you won't be healthy."⁸

Taylor thought differently. His unusual position as Political Agent, isolated from typical Anglo-Indian society and in constant contact with the Indian population in his areas of control, gave him a different perspective on Indian life, a perspective he was quick to defend when challenged on the authenticity of the observations in his work. One journal received a sharp letter from Taylor when its reviewer questioned the accuracy of the domestic scenes in Tara. In what was otherwise a positive review of the work, the critic had suggested that the interior and domestic lives of the characters were "drawn with great skill, and we should be glad, if we could to think also with great truth," but that "it is a little different from our received notions on the subject."⁹ Taylor did not like the implications of this point, and wrote back to say so. "I beg to inform the reviewer that there is no portion of the domestic life of Hindus or Mahomedans depicted in the book which is not a picture from the life, drawn as faithfully and literally as was possible in relation to the story."¹⁰ Taylor went on to explain that this

scrupulous attention to detail was important to the work, since it had been written precisely for didactic purposes, to teach the British readers about India, for "the amount of ignorance on the subject of native social existence in India, whether Mahomedan or Hindu, which exists in England, and indeed among Europeans who have been and who actually are in India, is distressing."¹¹

This point ties in with what Taylor had written earlier to his publisher when explaining his motive for writing an all Indian tale. Tara expounded his view that Indians and India could be understood by the British reader if they realised that Indian human nature was no different from their own. Taylor takes pains to underline this point throughout the novel, often in direct addresses to the reader. "The actors in my story are Hindu and Mahomedans," he exclaims in the prologue, "but the same passions and affections exist among them as among ourselves, and thus the motives and deeds of my characters may, at least, be intelligible." (p. vii) Later the reader is assured that, although wedding ceremonies in India may be different, the interest in wedding garments remain very much the same. "Ah, young English ladies," he exclaims, not forgetting to quickly include their mothers in his address, those

who may read these pages, you are not to believe that wedding trousseaux are confined to your own country and society! Very far from it. A young Hindu lady, or Mahomedan either -there is not much to choose between them in this respect- is as full of hope of a liberal, a handsome, outfit on her marriage, as any fashionable young lady of Belgravia or Mayfair; and believe me, is as proportionably delighted if it be so. (p. 37)

Similar assurances follow concerning love and death. Near the end of the work Taylor delivers his strongest comment on Indian character. Pointing to feelings his readers might have suffered while caring for

a sick relative, Taylor then asks, rhetorically, "Is there none of this among the people we write of?" (p. 37) Of course there is, he goes on to write:

The same motives exist there as here, the same deep ties of affection, the same interests, and the same hopes and fears -often, indeed, more powerful as belonging to minds more impetuous, and less regulated by conventional forms. Then the hope is greater, the agony of bereavement more bitter, and the suspense between the final issue, perhaps, more unendurable. (p. 37)

As can be noticed in the latter passage, Taylor is not prepared to extend the similarities too far. The similarities in passion and feeling in British and Indian character are kept within a framework of racial and religious differences: Indian and British feelings may be the same, but their mental outlooks differ. Taylor categorises this further by religion. Discussing the Indian landscape, for example, Taylor points out that it has been said of Indians that they are insensitive to the natural beauty around them. "We admit that Mussulmans (sic) to a great extent are so," he exclaims, "but not Hindus, still less Mahrattas(sic)." (p. 407) This, he writes, can be seen in Hindu culture, for

their sacred books, their ballads, and recited plays, abound with beautiful pictures of natural objects; and, living among combinations of the most glorious forms in nature, peopling every remarkable rock, deep dell, or giant tree with spiritual beings belonging peculiarly to each, who are worshipped with a rude veneration, -insensibility to outward impressions and their influence upon character would be impossible. (p. 407)

Tara's hero and heroine are portrayed unambiguously. As many critics have noted, Taylor idealises Fazil and Tara, making them into ideal representatives of their respective religions. Fazil, for example, is an honourable Muslim. As the hero of the work, he possesses all the noble characteristics needed to set him above the

other characters, including an unusual respect for Hindus. His closest friend and companion in arms in the novel is a Marathan, Bulwunt Rao, from whom he learns his skill in swordfighting and from whom he gains an insight into Hindu life.

Fazil's noble manner, which gains him the respect of his men, is allied to a skill in arms. Taylor's Indian heroes all share this characteristic: Ameer Ali in Confessions of a Thug, and Kasim Ali in Tippoo Sultaun are similarly described as skilled warriors. Fazil is no exception. In a passage that echoes similar sequences in his previous works, Taylor describes Fazil as

the idol of his men, both Moslems and Hindus. His martial exercises had begun early, and he had proved an apt scholar. Any of the men who particularly excelled in the use of a particular weapon had, in turn, the young noble for his pupil; and in all field accomplishments necessary to the soldier and gentleman of those days, the young Khan was well skilled. (p. 109)

In addition to a strong physique -"broad deep chest, round muscular arms, and thin flanks"-, Fazil also possesses the charm and features of all good heroes. (p. 109) If one added his martial accomplishments to his disposition, which was

open and cheerful, somewhat hasty perhaps at times, but in reality generous and affectionate, -a hearty frank manner, which few could resist, and a countenance, not strictly handsome, but which expressed all this and even more,

then, as Taylor remarks, "it will not be thought strange, that the young Khan should have become a universal favourite with his retainers." (p. 109)

Tara is also a favoured figure, well-bred, intelligent and beautiful. Taylor seems particularly drawn to using Hindu women as his heroines. Tara possesses all the attributes credited also to the

heroines in Taylor's subsequent works Ralph Darnell and Seeta. Tara, like the later character Seeta, is particularly discerning of the complexities of Hindu philosophy and religion. She also possesses a strength of character that prompts admiration from all who know her. And, of course, Tara abounds in the fighting spirit noticeable in Sozun, in Ralph Darnell, and Seeta, a spirit which prompts one of Fazil Khan's men to exclaim:

By Alla! this girl rides so that it is hard to follow her;
and we all say, there is that in her eyes which, had she a
sword in her hand, nay, without it would lead us, as only
thou, or the Khan could lead us... (p. 390)

Taylor's presentation of Tara, particularly as a typical romance heroine, calls to mind many of the female qualities extolled in Coventry Patmore's popular, representative, and often commented on, view of Victorian femininity and domesticity, "Angel in the House", first published in 1854. Patmore, for example, sees the ideal woman as a spiritually pure entity whose ideal qualities provoke men's worship. At one point he writes,

Her disposition is devout,
Her countenance angelical;
The best things that the best believe
Are in her face so kindly writ
The Faithless, seeing her, conceive
Not only heaven, but hope of it;¹²

Similarly, Taylor's portrait of Tara draws attention to the attention and respect she receives, not solely because of her beauty. As Taylor describes it, Tara inspires men with wonder:

None who had the privilege of addressing her ever omitted a loving greeting or respectful salutation: the public flower-sellers intrusted (sic) her with their choicest garlands or nosegays to offer up a the shrine...and even the rudest peasant or soldier looked at her, as she passed him, in wonder, stretched out his hand to her, and kissed the tips

of his fingers in a worshipful salutation and benediction.
(p. 1)

It is understandable that some critics had difficulty swallowing this, and other, idealised leading characterisations in the work. Their objections, however, ran deeper than mere quibbles over realism in fiction. The implication in many reviews of the work, was that the characters were unsatisfactory not because they were idealised protagonists, but more importantly, because they were idealised Indian protagonists. A point continually harped upon was the novel's lack of British characters for the reader to identify with. One critic jeered, "ordinary Eastern women are hardly fitted for the leading business in dramatic fiction," and suggested that Taylor switch to themes illustrative of more familiar home interest.¹³ After all, noted the writer, "We should never have seen Scott fall into the error of taking us away into such distant scenes as central Hindostan, without keeping up all the time some special link of connexion with European ideas and interests."¹⁴

Other commentators were equally dismissive of the work's suggestion of similarity between British and Indian experiences. "The minds of Hindus at least are cast in such a different mould from ours, and their family circles are so inaccessible to us," remarked a reviewer in The Athenaeum, "that no European can hope to be very successful in inventing characters for an Indian novel."¹⁵ Another critic concurred, adding rather regally,

We have too little sympathy with the feelings of Orientals in our own day to be touched with the sorrows and rejoicings of their remote ancestors, and the writer who seeks to move us with a work of fiction is mistaken if he looks for any great success in this direction. He had better choose his

subject from his own country and his own time if he cares that his work should be very popular.¹⁶

These reviews were partly to blame for the poorness of Taylor's subsequent work, Ralph Darnell. In trying to appease such harsh criticisms, Taylor strayed from the area he wrote best about, Central India, into the unfamiliar grounds of eighteenth-century England, and consequently failed to match the sharp and clear writing of Tara.

All of Tara's reviewers, even those unsympathetic to the characters, gave full marks for Taylor's descriptive powers. "Captain Taylor is clever at the description of warlike scenes," the disgruntled Saturday Review critic acknowledged, but added quickly, "He is no analyst of character."¹⁷ Other reviewers were more forthcoming in praise. The Calcutta Review proclaimed it "the most successful novel of native life that has ever been published,"¹⁸ and The Times reviewer, in spite of his low regard for the Eastern life and mind, exclaimed: "For its rapid action, in fact, we have seldom read a better story, or one which is more full of incidents sanguinary, trenchant, and robust."¹⁹

Tara profited from Taylor's first hand knowledge of Central India. He was one of the first writers to bring a note of verisimilitude to descriptions of Indian scenery, customs and people. As already mentioned, Tara is set in areas Taylor knew intimately, and is thus more accurately detailed. Unlike earlier chroniclers of Eastern romances, such as Beckford and Scott, Taylor did not use vague generalities to evoke the landscape. His descriptions are detailed and worked over to convey a concrete picture of the areas covered.

Taylor's familiarity with Central and Northern India, for example, is demonstrated in his description of the Tuljapur temple, dedicated to Bhowanee. Taylor first described the temple in a letterpress written to accompany his illustrations in Sketches in the Deccan, published in 1837. The temple was built to celebrate Kali's victory over a monster which inhabited the area. According to the legend, she fought and destroyed the evil spirit, and then "left the form in which she had appeared, having turned it into stone on the spot, as nearly as possible, where she had finished her task, and where it now stands."²⁰ This legend is repeated in Tara, along with a similar description of the temple. A small touch which adds to the vividness and detail of the account is the description of a wishing stone located at the back of the temple. The stone is described in Sketches in the Deccan as one

on which visitors are to place their hands, and they are to make a wish; should the stone turn to the right (of itself of course), the wish is granted by the goddess, they say; if to the left otherwise. We suppose the stone is very nicely balanced, for it certainly did turn when we touched it; but the goddess is very kind, for it never turns to the left nowadays.²¹

In Tara a similar description of the stone is placed as a footnote to a passing reference in the main text. Taylor describes a meeting between Moro Trimmul and Gunga, two of the many antagonists of the work, at the back of the temple "near the wishing-stone", which is then described at the bottom of the page as

a large stone placed on the rear basement of the temple. Votaries are directed to place a hand on each side of it, and make a wish. If it turns to the right, the wish is granted; if the left, otherwise. (p. 316)

Thus Taylor neatly provides authenticity to his description, much as an editor might, with an intrusion confined to the bottom of the page.

Unfortunately the authorial intrusion is not always kept to the bottom of the page. Taylor has an annoying habit of "buttonholing the dear reader," as one critic put it, with frequent intrusions to explain and ask for the reader's indulgence.²² Such outbursts as "You, O Christian reader! must not try his feeling by your own standard. You live under a holier and simpler faith" (p. 18); "I assure you, dear readers, that a proper orthodox Hindu marriage, is a very tiresome affair" (p. 49); or "Perhaps I ought to have told my fair readers more of the particulars of this double marriage..." (p. 524) figure throughout the work, along with authorial nods to the readers already familiar with India. Often the latter is in the form of knowing nudges made as if between acquaintances: "To some readers of our tale, this scenery will be familiar..." (p. 402); "Most of us know, too, what Eastern negotiations are, when weakness is covered by temporizing expedients of falsehood or treachery..." (p. 374); "Many who read these pages will remember like scenes." (p. 496) This begs the question, to whom was Taylor addressing his work? As I have already discussed, Taylor's purpose in writing the novel was to educate people about India. However, it is obvious he had difficulty deciding on a consistent approach to his reader. As Tara was a work of romance, there is no doubt Taylor wished to appeal to female readers, and his frequent addresses to "dear" or "fair" readers were probably encouraged by the novelist Mrs. Cashel Hoey, who helped plan the work, and his daughters, whom Taylor acknowledged in his letters

to John Blackwood criticised and helped edit the work prior to and during the publication procedure. At the same time Taylor had to appeal to those whom he wished to educate about India, in particular those already knowledgeable of India but perhaps without the same insight into "native" life as Taylor claimed to have. The result is an uneasy balance between the two which often detracts rather than adds to the work.

The historical aspect of the work proved a little easier for Taylor to deal with. Particular note should be made of Taylor's handling of historical facts. In the introduction, Taylor acknowledges his use of two works: Jonathan Scott's translation of Ferishta's History of Dekkan from the First Mahummedan Conquests (sic), and James Grant Duff's A History of the Mahrattas(sic). The former source, however, a translation of an eighteenth century Marathan historian's work, gave a brief and inaccurate account of the Pratapgarh incident, and was not used in Tara. Grant Duff's work was an important source for all subsequent Marathan historians, since it used information from many Indian sources since lost. Grant Duff, though, depended primarily on Muslim sources for information. Consequently his rendition of the Pratapgarh incident, for example, is slanted to suggest that Sivaji initiated the attack on Afzul. Hindu sources, naturally, suggest that Afzul attacked Sivaji first. This point will probably never be settled satisfactorily, but whatever the source, it is clear that Sivaji came prepared to do more than talk. Since Taylor depended on Grant Duff's account for his material, he follows the Muslim line that Sivaji initiated the attack. Curiously enough Taylor gets the date of the encounter

wrong. Taylor obstinately dates the Pratapgarh event to 1657, despite Grant Duff's clear statement that it occurred in 1659. This has the effect of compressing to make his work more exciting; the Vizier's death historically occurred in late 1657, thus the narrative becomes more rapid with Afzul riding out soon after in pursuit of the treacherous Sivaji. However there is evidence that Taylor genuinely thought the date to be 1657. In 1866, shortly after Tara was published, Taylor wrote the text for a work describing architecture in Bijapur. Outlining the history of the area, he again stressed 1657 as the date Afzul Khan met his death. It is odd that Taylor, who prided himself on the historical accuracy of his works, should cling to this date; most likely it was due to his obsessive theory that the major events of later Indian history occurred at exactly 100 year intervals.

Paralleling this is Taylor's imaginative tinkering with historical characters in Tara. Taylor makes some minor changes in order to fit his characters into their parts in the plot. These changes are merely cosmetic, since Taylor goes to considerable effort to keep the characters' actions consistent with historical accounts. At one point his publisher urged Taylor to kill off one of Sivaji's henchmen, Tannajee Maloosray, who features as one of the minor villains in the work. Taylor replied:

I cannot make Bulwunt Rao kill Maloosray -nor can I kill him at all. He is an historical character and after acting a great part in the history of his rough times, was killed at the storm of Singurh, near Poona. (BP, MS. 4186, 1863, f. 100)

This did not prevent Taylor from accentuating and even changing certain traits of his historical characters. Such is the case with

Sivaji. Sivaji does not play a large role in the work, although he is involved in some of the more dramatic scenes of the novel, the most striking being the Pratapgarh incident with Afzul Khan. Taylor does not cast him as a villain, except in an indirect way: it is not so much Sivaji as his followers Moro Trimmul and Tannajee Maloosray who are the evil characters in the work. Taylor entertains respect and some fascination for Sivaji. He is described as having "a countenance at once handsome and intelligent: while his slight figure, apparently more active than strong, evinced, by its lithe movement even while sitting, a power of endurance which was confirmed by the expression of his face." (p. 409) Taylor is particularly fascinated with Sivaji's close relationship with his mother. He emphasises the important role of Sivaji's mother in Marathan history, and explains that it was Shahji's long absences that allowed this unique bonding between mother and child:

Left to herself during his long absences and captivities with her young son among their native wilds, surrounded by rude retainers, she turned to him [Sivaji] as soon as he could comprehend her plans; and by the mother and son those designs were sketched out which, in respect of utter hopelessness at first, and splendid success afterwards, have few comparisons in the world's history. (p. 404)

Taylor admires Sivaji's devotion to his mother, writing approvingly that "as a pattern of filial piety and devotion, his example is still inculcated upon the Mahratta youth by many a village schoolmaster." (p. 410) For some reason this strong emotional link affects Taylor deeply, for shortly after he interjects a curious diatribe on motherhood that is quite out of place in the work:

A mother's loving hand! O ye who know it, who possess it as the rude waves of life come breaking one by one against you, be thankful that it is there in its old place, soothing and sustaining like ought else of earthly comfort! Ye who have lost it, never forget how lovingly it used to do its blessed

work. In times of anxious trial, perplexity, and sickness most of all, -ye shall feel it still, in the faith which leads ye where it is gone before, and awaits your coming. So, forget it not!-forget it not! (p. 410)

One peculiar characteristic that Taylor shifts from Sivaji to his mother concerns the reception of divine signals. Sivaji's supposed divinely inspired visions were important aspects of his cult following. Some Marathan sources state, for example, that Sivaji's plan for the daring attack on Afzul Khan came to him while in a religious trance, and that most of his successes in the field were augured by signs from the gods. In Tara, such messages are only received by Sivaji's mother. The implication is that such signals are only the result of the mother's wish to encourage and influence her son's bold actions, and they serve to highlight further the mother's hold over Sivaji. In one scene the mother's divination is enough to sway Sivaji's decision to spare Afzul Khan. His mother, having received a revelation, tells him the goddess Kali demands the sacrifice of the entire Bijapurian force facing Sivaji, including Afzul Khan. "Ah, mother," cries Sivaji, "not so; surely with pledged honour, soldier to a soldier, and a solemn invitation, it could not be." (p. 437) His resistance to the idea is not very strong. Asked to choose between the word of the Goddess, guaranteeing success, and his original intention, he acquiesces to his mother's command:

She had conquered, for there was no defying her will, - always the mainspring of the Rajah's actions- and, backed by those seemingly divine revelations in which he devoutly believed, he did not resist her. (p. 438)

What is interesting about this scene is not only the mother-son relationship portrayed but also the portrayal of Sivaji. Taylor fleshes out the bare account of historical fact by imaginatively

reconstructing the motivation behind his characters' actions. Thus in this scene Sivaji is seen struggling in a very human way for the proper way to deal with Afzul. Likewise Afzul Khan is seen in a very human light. Historical accounts portray him as the righteous Muslim condoning the desecration of the Hindu temple at Tuljapur. Tara shows him in a more ambiguous manner. Although a devout Muslim, Afzul attacks Tuljapur initially with the purpose only of rooting out some of Sivaji's men. Before the ensuing battle he urges his men to avoid desecrating the temple and concentrate on capturing Sivaji's followers. However, in the heat of the battle, an accompanying Muslim priest, a fanatical and high ranking member of the expedition, incites Afzul's men to strike their blows for the Muslim faith, and the desecration and ensuing massacre inevitably follows. Afzul feels some remorse for the action, and attempts to conciliate the Marathan survivors before moving on to Sivaji's headquarters. Although he is not regretful of the victory over the Marathans, pledging a thousand rupees in memory of it, he is ill at ease over the news of the temple desecration: "God knows I would not have had it so," he murmurs at one point. (p. 340)

It is tempting to argue that Taylor was merely acting as apologist for what was perhaps the most infamous of Muslim atrocities perpetrated in the Deccan during the seventeenth century. It has never been known exactly why Afzul Khan chose to make such a large detour to Tuljapur, which lies to the east of Sholapur, when Pratabgarh lay directly west of his starting point. Suggesting that it was a punitive expedition is a plausible conclusion on Taylor's part. Afzul's characterisation, whether purely an imaginative

reconstruction or merely a rebuttal to Hindu conclusions, is nevertheless well done. Taylor, however, leaves it up to the hero of the work, Afzul's son Fazil, to understand the true effect of Afzul's action. Only Fazil is fully aware of the implications of the massacre:

He dreaded the effect on the Mahratta people at large. No one could know of the true reason of Afzool Khan's advance on the town; the plunder and desecration of the temple would seem to all to have been the actual purpose; and the deed would produce a shudder of execration, he well knew, from one end of Maharastra to the other. (p. 344)

One of the more contentious aspects of Tara is its portrayal of Indian religion. Some early reviewers, as mentioned previously, disliked Taylor's sympathetic portrayal of Indians, and this dislike extended to his depiction of their religious customs and beliefs. One critic thought the religious zeal of Tara, for example, all too Western to be true to life, remarking that her religious musings led one

to suspect far too great an infusion of European culture and purely Christian modes of thought. The way in which she is made to idealize the coarse forms of her native superstition, and to soften its cruel or licentious features into shadowy myths, savours far more of the critical faculty of the modern West than of the simple untutored instincts of the Hindoo(sic) woman.²³

These criticisms have validity. In idealising his Indian heroine, for example, Taylor chose an interpretation of Hinduism advocated by Ram Mohun Roy, an early nineteenth century Indian reformer who developed a view of Hinduism appealing to many westerners. Roy suggested, and Taylor follows this view, that Hinduism had degenerated from an originally pure form of practice, what Taylor interpreted to mean "the pure Hinduism of the Vedas."²⁴ In an article written soon after finishing Tara, Taylor explains that Hinduism, in

its original purity, "was at least a gentle and spiritual adoration of Divine beneficence: ideal, metaphysical, and pantheistic."²⁵ His subsequent description of its form of worship also serves as a summary of the beliefs idealised in Tara:

Its ordinary sacrifices were simple oblations of flowers and fruits, milk and butter; and its ritual, a minute observance of forms, accompanied with the repetition of prayers, hymns of adoration, and sacred texts. It prescribed no sacrifice of animal life, and one of the holiest of its perfections was existence without the destruction of any living creature.²⁶

Tara observes these rituals and believes in these precepts. Her life is complicated, however, by the demands of caste and community, and here we may find some criticism of certain Indian attitudes to such things as the remarriage of Hindu widows, forbidden by many Hindu castes, suttee, and Hindu-Muslim relationships. These criticisms are subtly implied rather than overtly stated.

Concerning religious fanaticism, for example, the reader is meant to see the contrast between the moderate and tolerant behaviour of Fazil and Tara, and the conservative and astringent attitudes of their respective opposites. Fazil reflects on the result of Muslim fanaticism following the Tuljapur massacre and we are meant to feel as shocked as he is by the behaviour of the instigator, the Muslim priest. Tara undergoes a severe trial at the hands of a Hindu widow, who zealously maintains the Hindu rituals of widowhood and persecutes Tara for not adhering to the strict path demanded of all virgin widows. Again we are meant to feel consternation at this cruel and unfeeling aspect of Hinduism, just as we are meant to applaud Tara's rescue from the pyre she mounts in order to avoid the clutching hands of Moro Trimmul and to satisfy the community's doubts as to her

purity. What should be stressed here is that Taylor, in criticising the more fundamentalist aspects of each religion, does not necessarily criticise those who participate in the rituals of widowhood or suttee. What he criticises is the pressures of communities on individuals to conform to rigidly harsh and unfeeling customs. Thus Tara's strong belief in Hinduism and her simple but powerful worship of Kali is worthy of admiration, but the caste rules which oblige her to adopt the harsh, ascetic life of the Hindu widow are not. Tara's only escape is to dedicate herself as a priestess at Kali's temple.

It is also important to realise that Taylor, although writing in the 1860's, makes a conscious effort to deal with Indian customs and practices in terms of their importance in the 1650's. His criticisms of certain customs, implied but muted, are balanced by sympathetic appraisals of their importance in the lives of past generations of Indians. The act of suttee, for example, although described as now being curbed "under the stern power of a purer creed," is eulogized for its part in the past. "How many have died," Taylor asks,

alike self devoted, alike calm, alike fearless! Women with ordinary affections, ordinary habits of life, suddenly lifted up into a sublimity of position, -even to death,- by an influence they were unable to repress or control - barbarous and superstitious if you will, but sublime. (p. 477-78)

We don't find this in any other nineteenth century Anglo-Indian novel.

We may not find too many Muslim-Hindu unions described with such passion either. Although Tara's conversion and subsequent marriage to Fazil were glossed over by many contemporary reviewers, more

recent Indian critics have pointed out the improbability of marriages between Hindus and Muslims. As one writer put it, "Romance does not show itself in communities respecting caste and seclusion of women."²⁷ This is said despite the precedent set by Muslim rulers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century of marrying high caste Hindu women. Akbar married several Rajput women to strengthen alliances with newly conquered territories. Bhupal Singh, although objecting to this aspect of Tara, nevertheless admits begrudgingly that such marriages are possible but not common.²⁸

An interesting interpretation of this issue was recently made in a study on English fiction on India. In it the author dramatically announces, "Taylor is a pioneer for Hindu-Muslim unity." The novel, he adds,

is a crusade for social reform. There is neither Hindu nor Muslim when true love speaks. In every context this role of the novelist is evident.²⁹

Another Indian critic disagreed, arguing that Tara's message was aimed at Hindus. "Tara's conversion and marriage with a Moslem(sic)," the author writes, "is a pointed reminder to Orthodox Hinduism to move with the times for sheer self preservation."³⁰

Such explanations sound plausible and tempting until one realises they ignore several important points about the novel. First, Taylor is presenting an idealistic picture of two lovers who unite despite their religious differences. Their union, however, is only made possible after Tara has been cut off from her family and Hindu society, a process that takes several stages. At first she becomes a priestess to avoid the rituals of widowhood. This involves a certain distancing from her family. In declaring herself suttee, Tara

irrevocably distances herself from Hindu society, for she in effect declares herself dead. Thus when she is saved from the funeral pyre she cannot return to her old ways, since she no longer exists in the eyes of the community. Tara is no longer a Hindu as far as her peers are concerned, and her only recourse, in order to survive and be with Fazil, is to become a Muslim. This contradicts the idea that the work pushes Hindu-Muslim unity, mainly because Tara is forced to give up her religious identity in order to unite with Fazil. This theme of a rebirth through suffering led many contemporary reviewers ignorant of Indian literary and religious tradition to speculate on the Christian nature of the work; in fact such scenes of ordeals by fire were not new to Indian literature. Perhaps the earliest and best known example is towards the end of the major Indian epic The Ramayana, composed around 1000 B.C., in which Sita, wife of Rama, must prove her virtue and innocence by an ordeal by fire. Similarly Tara, in order to escape Moro Trimmul's clutches and prove her virtue to the Hindu community, must also ascend a burning pyre. In Sita's case, the God of Fire protects her from the flames and she emerges unscathed and proven to be sinless and pure. For Tara, however, more realistic help comes from Fazil, and her "rebirth" is followed by conversion to another religion.

Second, and most importantly, the work is aimed primarily at British, not Indian, readers. The work could not have a message aimed at Hindus because access to it was extremely limited for them at the time it was written. Taylor's aim was to educate his countrymen on India and its people, and therefore his criticisms of Indian society were probably meant for those ruling or attempting to

convert Indians. That is, the civil servant and the missionary. The implication is that their understanding of the positive and negative aspects of Indian society would enable them to rule and change India for the better. But unsympathetic rule would achieve nothing.

In setting the work in the 1650s, Taylor was deliberately illustrating a period when European influence in India was slight, and Indian customs and actions were not subject to European interference. Perhaps this was in response to the concept that Indian history had begun only after the British arrived. If so, Taylor achieved more than most Anglo-Indian novelists by attempting to deal with India and its people with respect and sympathy. His message reached at least one of his contemporaries, who wrote a suitable epigraph on the work:

Everything that makes us more fully aware of the identity of the race, and of the strange resemblances which are to be found under every external diversity and contradiction, is a service done to humanity; and as such, we reckon 'Tara' worthy of more extended remark than might be due to its mere merit as a novel, considerable as that is.³¹

Notes

1. Percival Spear, A History of India 2, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986, 38. [The other Indian statesman referred to in the passage is Asoka (264-223 B.C.)]
2. ibid, 37.
3. Viswanatham, India in English Fiction, Waltair: Andhra University Press, 1971, 36.
4. Blackwood Papers, acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 383. (All further references to the Blackwood Papers will be noted in the text as BP.)
5. Philip Meadows Taylor, Tara, 3d ed., London: Kegan, Paul & Co., 127.
6. Sir Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1977, 11.
7. Taylor, Tara, 140. (All further references to page numbers in Tara will be noted in brackets in the text.)
8. J.R. Ackerley, Hindoo Holiday, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983, 23-24.
9. The Guardian, Dec 9 1863: 1156.
10. The Guardian, Dec 23 1863: 1205.
11. ibid.
12. Frederick Page, ed., The Poems of Coventry Patmore, Oxford: O.U.P., 1949, 83.
13. The Saturday Review, Oct 31 1863: 587-8.
14. ibid, 587.
15. The Athenaeum, 1876 (Oct 10 1863): 463.
16. The Times, Nov 5 1863: 12.
17. Saturday Review, 587.
18. Calcutta Review, 40.77 (Jan 1864): 193.
19. The Times, Nov 5 1863: 12.
20. Sketches in the Deccan, 1837, no page number.
21. ibid.
22. Henry Bruce, ed., The Story of My Life, OUP, 1920, xxviii.

23. The Saturday Review, Oct 31 1863: 587.
24. Edinburgh Review, April 1864: 390.
25. ibid.
26. ibid.
27. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, Philip Meadows Taylor: A Critical Study, Bombay: New Book Co., Ltd., 1951, 142.
28. Bhupal Singh, A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, 52.
29. K. Viswanatham, India in English Fiction, Waltair: Andhra University Press, 1971, 38.
30. Mansukhani, 142.
31. (Margaret Oliphant), Blackwood's Magazine, 94. 97, (Nov 1863): 625.

5. RALPH DARNELL

At the beginning of 1864 Taylor started work on the second novel of the trilogy he had begun with Tara. His intentions concerning the work, which was eventually published as Ralph Darnell, were first detailed to his publisher, John Blackwood, in a letter dated 30 January 1864. "What do you say to going on with the series?" he asked, adding, "I have been lying by hard resting, but shall be prepared, I hope, by and bye (sic) to begin 1757, beginning with the "Black Hole", and ending with the battle of Plassey, and your kindness has been so great in regard to Tara that the refusal is quite at your disposal."¹ After Blackwood's acceptance of the proposal in late August, Taylor set about working on the manuscript in earnest, but it would take a further year before he could announce its completion.

In Ralph Darnell, Taylor sought to meet some of the earlier criticism of Tara by writing a work more appealing to British interests. By setting Ralph Darnell in both eighteenth-century Britain and India, and by dealing with historical events more immediately familiar to most of his contemporaries, Taylor hoped to make it more accessible to the reading public. The central events in the work, the "Black Hole" and the Battle of Plassey, were known to many contemporary readers who might otherwise have heard little of India. As one historian has commented, the popularisation of late eighteenth-century accounts of these events, and particularly the emphasis on the supposed tragedy of the "Black Hole of Calcutta",

"grew so great that the Black Hole became, along with Plassey and the Mutiny, one of the three things which 'every schoolboy knew' about India."²

Two events in the mid-eighteenth century were to transform British involvement in India: the Carnatic wars against the French, fought intermittently between 1746 and 1761, and the Battle of Plassey in 1757. Percival Spear notes:

The first made a violent break with the past, and ushered in a period of opposition to the French and of participation in Indian politics. The second began that period of adventure and cosmopolitanism which only ended with Cornwallis.³

Up until the 1740's, British interests, as represented by the East India Company, had been confined to developing trading concerns with Indian states through indirect means and with as little political involvement as possible. The early reverses suffered in 1746 in the Carnatic wars shook the British trading communities and caused a reappraisal of British goals and interests in India. The subsequent strategy and the victories which followed against the French and the Bengal powers shifted the balance of power and influence in the Indian subcontinent towards Britain. This brought about a change in attitude. The change was linked to "the influx of professional soldiers (men of mature habits and fixed ideas before they came to India), the transformation of merchants into politicians and the mere mathematical increase of numbers."⁴

Military strength meant a stronger hand with which to enforce British trading demands on reluctant Indian states. It also meant a development of diplomatic relations with those Indian states interested in using Britain's armies against their Indian opponents.

This provided an opportunity of gaining further trading concessions and even territory in return for such services. An example of this can be seen in the subsequent carving up of part of Mysore between the British, the Marathans, and Hyderabad following the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799, and in the concessions wrung from the two Indian powers as recompense for British help.

The Battle of Plassey gave Britain military supremacy in the rich trading area of Bengal. This development is crucial to an understanding of Ralph Darnell. Taylor sets this event within the context of a developing imperial "ethos" which exalts Britain's later role in India's administration.

The East India Company first established itself in the Bengal area in 1650, trading from a series of minor factory posts in competition with Dutch and French factors. In 1690 the Company founded a factory at Calcutta, on the Hugli river, and this became its trading centre in the rich Bengal area. The Bengal trading establishments rapidly became among the most lucrative and profitable of the Company's Indian posts, shipping large quantities of cotton and silk goods, sugar, and saltpeter to Britain. The rise in British trading power and influence in the area in the early eighteenth century coincided with a decline in Mughal power and influence. The Mughal Empire, which reached its peak in the seventeenth century, was disintegrating in the eighteenth century. Beset by invaders from Persia and Afghanistan, and facing opposition from regional powers in the Deccan and Hyderabad, it steadily lost territory and influence. From 1719, its province of Bengal was ruled as an autonomous area by hereditary governors, and "the only remaining ties with Delhi were imperial

investitures and the remission of 52 lakhs a year as the annual tribute or peshkash."⁵ This changed in 1740 when the Bengal ruler was overthrown by Alivardi Khan, his deputy, who held on to power until his death in April of 1756. His grandson, Siraj-ud-daula, succeeded him, but fourteen months later he too was toppled and replaced, this time by the British using a puppet ruler. This intervention in Bengal began an era of active British involvement in Indian political affairs which brought about full-fledged British control of much of India by the mid-nineteenth century.

Siraj-ud-daula was ill-equipped to deal with the conflicts which swamped his rule. Barely twenty years old on his accession to power, poorly educated, and badly advised, Siraj acted on impulse and with little common-sense, making it that much easier for his opponents to capitalise on his many mistakes. One of his first acts as ruler was to lead an army against the British at Fort William in Calcutta, after learning that they were building new batteries on the Hugli without his permission, and so allegedly contravening previous agreements. Siraj's animus against the British may have owed something to the fact that a former revenue administrator wanted by Siraj had taken refuge with them. On 4 June 1756 Siraj-ud-daula's men captured the small factory of Kasimbazar, and by 16 June had reached Calcutta, prompting the governor and most of the town's officials to flee downriver, leaving the small military garrison to fend for itself. The garrison surrendered and was taken prisoner on 20 June, after one day's resistance. This was followed by the incident universally known in Britain as the "Black Hole of Calcutta", where a large group of prisoners, generally said to be 146

in number, were placed inside a small dungeon or cell overnight. From this only 23 survivors were said to have emerged the next day.

The traditional version of the Black Hole incident, in which every good nineteenth-century British schoolboy was instructed, was based almost entirely on a highly coloured (and highly suspect) account by V.Z. Holwell, one of the few civilian counsellors who remained behind to defend Calcutta. As one commentator has noted though, this account lay for fifty years neglected, "until it then became convenient material for the compilers of an imperialist hagiology."⁶ Scholars disagree as to the truth of Holwell's account, but as suggested by the above comment this version served as valuable propaganda, encouraging British expansion in India, by underscoring the supposed savagery of Indians under native rule. This is how H. H. Wilson, for example, the editor of James Mill's History of British India, argued the case in 1858. He discounted Mill's own explanation of the affair (Mill saw it as a mistake), by self-righteously implying it to be a sign of divine intervention, intended to put the non-Christian in his place:

The whole transaction admits of no defence: it was an exemplification of Mohammedan insolence, intolerance, and cruelty; and in contemplating the signal retribution by which it has been punished, a mind susceptible of reverence, though free from superstition, can scarcely resist the impression, that the course of events was guided by higher influences than the passions and purposes of man.⁷

To contemporaries, the incident was useful as justification for Robert Clive's subsequent (rather unprincipled) conduct in disposing of Siraj-ud-daula and replacing him with the more compliant ruler Mir Jafar.

Once the news of the fall of Calcutta reached Madras, an expedition was prepared to recapture it under the command of Robert Clive. It did not leave until the middle of October, but by early January Calcutta was regained with little resistance and in February a treaty was signed between Siraj-ud-daula and the British restoring the Company's trading privileges in Calcutta. Siraj-ud-daula had been forced to back down. Thereafter, disaffection among his officers, and lack of confidence among the financial supporters of his regime, soon developed into open conspiracy to overthrow him, and the British took a hand in this. Siraj's brother-in-law Mir Jafar was proposed as his successor and in June a secret treaty was signed between him and the British. The agreement promised large sums of money both to the Company and its chief factors in return for British support against Siraj-ud-daula's army. That same month saw Clive and his men engage once more with Siraj's army, this time in a swampy area near the small village of Plassey. The battle resulted in a complete rout of Siraj's men, and Mir Jafar was accordingly installed as the new Nawab. Siraj-ud-daula, having fled the battlefield, was caught shortly afterwards and assassinated, according to some sources on the express orders of Mir's son Miran.

The subsequent rush by British factors to line their pockets as quickly as possible at the expense of the Bengal state was one immediate result of this sudden rise in British fortune. British successes on the military field broke down "the barrier which limited power and opportunity had erected against the ambitions of the merchants."⁸ Even the supreme apologist for Clive's actions, Lord Macaulay, could not help but condemn the rapaciousness with which

Company servants set up and enforced internal trade monopolies designed to benefit themselves:

Every servant of a British factor was armed with all the power of his master; and his master was armed with all the power of the Company. Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while thirty millions of human beings were reduced to the extremity of wretchedness. They had been accustomed to live under tyranny, but never under tyranny like this.⁹

Such behaviour did not pass without comment from informed non-European sources. Ignatius Sancho, for example, black butler to the Montagus, and a friend of Laurence Sterne, had this to say in 1777 in response to a comment from a young British resident of Bombay concerning the deceitfulness of the natives:

I say it is with reluctance that I must observe your country's conduct has been uniformly wicked in the East-West Indies - and even on the Coast of Guinea. The grand object of English navigators - indeed of all Christian navigators - is money -money -money...¹⁰

The excesses of this period in British expansionism were eventually curbed, ironically enough by, amongst others, Clive himself and Warren Hastings, who had either themselves profited directly from such transactions or been suspected of doing so. That the foundation of the British Empire in India had been laid in such a fashion proved an embarrassment to later, more "Christian", British administrators, and this may in part account for the zeal with which nineteenth-century advocates of the "imperial mission" stressed the severe provocation and its outcome, the supposedly impartial and benevolent new type of British administrator who subsequently made his way to Indian shores. Although Philip Meadows Taylor was not an enthusiastic advocate of the brand of "cultural imperialism" espoused by Lord Macaulay, his belief in the strength and importance of

British rule in India still echoed, if in less shrill tones, the sentiments of his contemporaries, and can be detected throughout the narrative of Ralph Darnell.

In Ralph Darnell, Taylor returns to a period in British imperial history that he had dealt with twenty-five years earlier in Tippoo Sultaun. This time, though, the work is much more than a straightforward historical romance in the tradition of Sir Walter Scott. In Ralph Darnell, Taylor consciously attempts to imitate contemporary "popular" fiction, although he was loathe to pander too much to "public taste", claiming he could not write such things well. Such was his comment in a letter to John Blackwood on 9 February 1864 on the popularity of Miss Braddon's work John Marchmont's Legacy. Although exclaiming that it was nice to see how popular her work was, Taylor couldn't help observing rather piquedly, "One can't account for taste and I'm afraid sensation novels are not in my line." 11 Nevertheless Taylor gamely attempted to insert the melodramatic touches he thought the public wanted: low-life characters who gamble and attempt highway robberies, a disinherited suspected bastard son, dissipated Indian princes, even battle scenes, and a dramatic finale involving an embalmed corpse.

The plot is, even by his usual standards, particularly torturous. However it is not as difficult to piece together as his previous work Tara. Ralph Darnell is possibly illegitimate. His father is the brother of a Northumbrian baron. He runs off to Amsterdam with a local girl named Grace Smithson, and when they return home after two years with a son, the boy is left in the care of Grace's mother. Soon after both parents drown in a boating accident, and the baron,

Ralph's uncle, takes him in, despite the lack of proof concerning his legitimacy. Ralph is eventually sent to London to work under the direction of another uncle in the family's shipping firm. Falling among bad company, he disgraces himself by participating in a highway robbery against the baron. This leads to a family decision to kidnap and ship him off to India, where he assumes a new identity as Ralph Smithson. Soon after his arrival in Calcutta in 1756, he participates in its ill-fated defence against the army of the Bengal Nawab, or ruler, Siraj-ud-daula, and subsequently emerges intact from the infamous "Black Hole". Following this he is injured in a skirmish between Indian and British forces, but is saved by Sozun, an Amazon-like warrior and mistress of Siraj. Sozun nurses him back to health and Ralph returns to the British forces in time to fight in the battle of Plassey in June 1757 under the command of Robert Clive. Ralph not only distinguishes himself in the course of the battle but also he encounters a British soldier there who has papers that supposedly prove his legitimacy! But later enquiries show that these are false and the supposed marriage only a cruel deception practiced on Ralph's mother. Ralph's illegitimacy provides him with cause to work in India, for such matters supposedly don't count in the rough and tumble world of eighteenth century India, and also provides a good reason for Ralph to marry a native woman, for no self-respecting society girl would take him now. Sozun, the Afghan heroine, acts as a matchmaker to arrange a marriage between Ralph and the Begum Noor-ool-Nissa, the pure but much abused wife of the now deceased Nawab of Bengal. The marriage lasts happily for twenty years until the peaceful death of the Begum. Ralph returns home to Britain and

eventually dies embracing the embalmed body of his wife, which proves a suitably bizarre note to end the work on.

These elaborate and often incredible plot ingredients were not universally noted. One contemporary reviewer wrote:

In 'Ralph Darnell' the reader must be prepared to find...no "sensation," romance, or mystery whatever; but in their stead two vivid pictures of real life -one English and the other Indian- a hundred years ago.¹²

Aside from the fact that sensational moments form a large part of the plot structure, this reviewer seems peculiarly ill-informed about what constitutes a vivid picture of eighteenth-century life, at least as far as the English portion of the novel is concerned. The weakest part of the work in fact is its English section, which is flatly and unconvincingly presented. Another contemporary reviewer noted this when he urged his readers, "Meanwhile skip the first volume and a half, or read the Virginians instead, which will teach you just as much, and study the last volume and a half page by page, and ponder."

13

This is acute as Taylor must certainly have used William Thackeray's work The Virginians, set in the same period, as a source for his description of eighteenth-century English life. But it is also used, openly, to underline a main theme of Ralph Darnell: the manner in which the disadvantaged protagonist triumphs over adversity to become a better person and fine leader. Ralph's disadvantage, initially, is related to the social disgrace of being an illegitimate son. Describing how Thackeray's hero was quickly introduced into high circles after arriving in Britain from America, for example, Taylor makes the point that Ralph's fate is different, for "Mr.

Ralph was not in the same rank of life or station as that which Mr. Henry Warrington attained at once through his aristocratic family connections; nor were the means of that attainment by the other greatest road, money, at all abundant; nor were his companions acknowledged by my Lord March, or other persons of their station...."¹⁴ Ralph cannot be acknowledged as the rightful heir of his uncle, nor can he be introduced into "high" society until the taint of illegitimacy is removed. This turns out to be of little concern in the end except indirectly. What matters is the way events like those Ralph encounters shape his character, as they shaped the characters of men who eventually ruled India for Britain. Writing to the editor of the Athenaeum, Taylor describes his intentions in producing the work:

Ralph Darnell is meant only as an exposition of the type of man who, for the most part without good birth, good education, or good morals, were steadied in their after lives by the pressure of the events in which they took part & the weight of the interests of which they had to assume charge; and then became useful and persevering instruments of our country's greatness in India.¹⁵

Taylor reiterates this in a letter to his publisher, John Blackwood, explaining in similar terms his hope that people would see the work as a "picture of the type of men who went to India, who were neither of very good birth, morals, or education, but who were forced into situations which made them steady."¹⁶ This point was one held by many of Taylor's contemporaries, who felt that the high standards supposedly present in the Indian civil service could be attributed to the steadying influence of responsibility. G.O. Trevelyan, for example, merely reiterated these opinions when he wrote in 1864, "The real education of a civil servant consists in the responsibility that

devolves on him at an early age, which brings out whatever good there is in a man."¹⁷

In approaching this theme, Taylor is careful to warn his readers that the types of character they will encounter in the course of their reading are not ideal. This calls for several apologies as to the strong nature of the language and the rough nature of the characters' actions. A defence is offered on the grounds of human nature, which is the key concept used to justify immoderate conduct among the characters. At one point Taylor coyly explains that he has been forced to modify certain conversations, which in their original form would have included "explosive expressions, which our ancestresses used not to object to."¹⁸ Taylor adds: "the quiet form of speech I use to express what they said may appear strange and untrue to nature," but this is only done out of concern for the reader, for "as I think that I could not safely record the conversation exactly as it was, without offence, it were therefore best modified." (p. 12) These disclaimers were in fact a nod towards the publisher. During the preparation of the manuscript for publication, John Blackwood remarked on the coarseness of the language, and in response Taylor tried to justify its presence by referring to similar language in Thackeray's The Virginians. In a letter dated 11 October 1865, Taylor explained:

When the M.S. was being read to my father, as it was written, he too remonstrated at the occasional explosions: but afterwards, recollecting what genteel society was in his young days, (he is 87), thought I had not overdone them. I then got the Virginians which is very nearly the same period as Ralph Darnell, and looked on what Thackeray had written in the same line, and found I was within the mark, and I therefore let what I had written remain. This is only to explain why there is any of it and I shall have great pleasure on toning down what there is.¹⁹

Here Taylor felt, "One need not give offence, even to the most sensitive of ones readers, on a point of obsolete custom."²⁰ The manuscript was altered accordingly.

Taylor was not unique in facing such forms of moral censorship from his publisher. As many analysts of the nineteenth century have noted, the 1860s in general was marked by an increased attempt to protect the reading public from anything that "might bring a blush to the cheek of the young person."²¹ This, many critics have claimed, was due to the introduction of cheaper reading material, such as shilling magazines, which extended the family reading further.²² The result was noticeable: authors such as Charlotte Bronte, whose works had been published earlier in the century without criticism, suddenly found their reputations and writings under attack for supposed impropriety. But this censorship only operated for a short period, peaking in the 1860s. As one critic notes, "In the forties, for example, there was much less squeamishness than in the sixties, by which time the habit of family reading had become firmly established; and by the eighties and nineties Hardy, Moore, and others had broken the familial tyranny."²³

Nevertheless, Taylor and other writers had to make concessions in order to satisfy demands for propriety. Thus we find Taylor apologising for the necessity of including some scenes of drunkenness, for any accurate portrayal of the period must take account of such matters. "I profess that this history has to deal with the truth," he notes, "and that, whether the acts of those who have part in it be good or evil, they shall be faithfully set forth to the end." (p. 17) And just in case the reader still hasn't

understood the point of all this, Taylor inserts a paragraph pointing to the key feature of human nature. "For after all, my friends," Taylor exclaims,

this is the true aspect of all human nature -poor, imperfect, blind, striving, jostling human nature; and my opinion is, that you would no more believe all the characters I have to bring before you to be perfectly good, not though I painted them with brightest colours and the softest moral brushes I could find, than you would believe them to be perfectly bad, even though I blackened them with all the sins named in the commination (sic) service. (p. 17)

Thus, in reading the novel, the reader is instructed to "take the people who belong to it in general, and this very Ralph Darnell in particular, as you may find them." (p. 17)

Ralph first appears drinking, gambling and swearing in a tavern. This behaviour, we discover, is not characteristic of Ralph. He is a decent sort of person who has become mixed up with the wrong set of people. His major sin seems to be a craving for excitement. He likes gambling, "and was growing to like it still better, not for the sake of money, but for the excitement which accompanied it." (p. 27) Ralph's gambling and drinking habits, however, are seen as in line with the normal practices of the young gentlemen of the time in London, practices which pale in significance once Ralph lands in Calcutta and observes the habits of the British residents. Even hardened Ralph is shocked by the licentiousness and immorality of his Calcuttan peers, for "though by no means squeamish, he found, in the English society of Calcutta, harder drinking, coarser swearing, and deeper play than he had been accustomed to, and a general tone of profligacy which belonged, as it were, to a lower grade of society altogether." (p. 219) It is emphasised that Ralph, for all his previous failings, still seeks to conduct himself in keeping with his

family background, following the dictum that "there never had been a Darnell that was not a gentleman." (p. 219)

Taylor is particularly concerned in Ralph Darnell to demonstrate Ralph's gentlemanly qualities. This concern about being a "gentleman" is also reflected in Taylor's autobiography, where he makes several references to this concept. In advising future administrators travelling to India, for example, Taylor urges them to "use true courtesy to natives of all degrees," particularly since this, when "rightly pursued in a gentlemanly fashion, not only exacts respect from natives of all classes, but gratitude and affection likewise."²⁴ We also see high praise reserved for the Rajah of Vijayanagar, whose personal traits could be used to describe those of Taylor's fictional heroes; he is "entirely free from presumption, full of information and intelligence, active and manly in his habits, and of very prepossessing appearance," all of which prove him "in every respect a 'gentleman'."²⁵

The notion of a "gentleman" is further developed in Ralph Darnell, in relation to Ralph's behaviour once he reaches India. Recalling Taylor's initial thematic concern for the work, that it must portray the steadying effect of the pressure of events on Ralph's character, one can see that in fact this is also intended to reflect Taylor's own experiences, and perhaps to comment on his own development into the type of administrator which Ralph becomes. The parallels are striking. Although initially sent out to be a trader, Ralph soon finds himself part of a military force, defending Calcutta from attack by Siraj-ud-daula's men. Likewise Taylor, initially arrived in Calcutta as a callow youth to work in a trading business, then

encountered different opportunities as a member of the Nizam's Army. From the army Ralph moves into more diplomatic duties, working as an advisor to royalty, much as Taylor did. The description of Ralph's motives for continuing to work in India sounds like a self-appraisal on Taylor's part: "In India there was future service for his country; a noble leader, and a crowd of struggling princes and peoples, among whom he might have his portion of usefulness." (p. 422-23) The enthusiasm and goodwill Ralph brings to his work, the result of his being steadied by rough but exciting experiences as Clive's aide-de-camp, prove ideal in gaining Indians' confidence, so much so that in times of trouble "they fly to the protection of one of their oldest and ablest advocates with a confidence which General Smithson could not refuse." (p. 443) Ralph gains respect by leading rather than driving men, exemplifying Taylor's view of how the British should behave in India. In his autobiography he remarks: "My experience has taught me that large masses of men are more easily led than driven, and that courtesy and kindness and firmness will gain many a point which, under a hard and haughty bearing, would prove unattainable."²⁶

Ralph's "gentlemanly" qualities, though, are also simply the usual heroic virtues of most of Taylor's protagonists. Personal qualities are complemented by skill in weaponry and horse-riding. Chivalry is important. Ralph cannot strike a woman, even in the most heated moment of battle and so, when he comes face to face with the amazon-like Sozun, leading a group of Afghan warriors, he puts down his sword to avoid injuring her. This only serves to endear him to Sozun, who becomes fascinated with this man so unlike her own countrymen. Following his capture Ralph is thrown into the Black Hole

dungeon with the other captives, and again he displays his gallantry by protecting the lone woman captive from being crushed to death. Having forced their way to the one window in the small cell, he stands over her to protect her from being trampled underfoot. Such courtesy is well appreciated, even if it is given at the expense of the other prisoners, who are pushed away when they crowd too near the window.

While Taylor makes some effort to demonstrate differing aspects to Ralph's character, he fails to do the same for the major British historical figure in the work, Robert Clive. In Ralph Darnell, Taylor utilises his favourite technique of highlighting the nature of important historical characters in the context of their effect on his fictional characters. In this case, Ralph Darnell, who has met Clive earlier in England, is attached to Clive's command following the siege of Calcutta, and through him we follow Clive's successes up to and including the Battle of Plassey. Clive, however, is a shadowy character, barely fleshed out before being whisked away from the work. There are many paeans to his leadership and fighting skills, but little character development. We learn of his ambitious nature, and of his impatience with the British merchants who stand in the way of his ambitions. And his ambition, as Taylor makes clear early on, is to bring India under British rule. On a visit to England, Clive expounds his plans and visions concerning India to Ralph's uncle. "Give me a couple of thousand Englishmen, Mr. Darnell," he exclaims, "and let me march through India to Bengal; I will sweep away Bussy (sic), clever as he is, and the Company...shall rule in Bengal instead of the Nabob, and do as they please." (p. 46) Britain's

destiny is to rule in India, he goes on to state, for "that we shall possess that country, Mr. Darnell, -that we must inevitably possess it- I believe as firmly as that I am Robert Clive." (p. 46)

Clive is the first of the soldier-statesmen whose military endeavours expanded British control of India. Taylor presents him as being very conscious of his destiny in redirecting the British presence in India from a trading to a ruling power. This is particularly brought out in Taylor's depiction of the well-known incident prior to the final engagement at Plassey, when the British army, rather than attacking immediately, lay idle while Clive suffered a crisis of confidence. Clive's indecisiveness, Taylor suggests, was not due to doubt regarding the outcome, but to doubt as to its consequence. For a moment Clive has scruples as to whether it is worth forging forward, as he explains to Ralph. The impending victory would only be the beginning of many such victories, for

this movement cannot stop here. Once our territorial power begins, it must grow. State after state, prince after prince, must disappear before us -before the might of England and her civilising power. (p. 340)

"Others more daring than I," he goes on to say, "and more fortunate, will follow me, and our flag shall not only fly from side to side of India, but these people will be our subjects." (ibid) The implication is that India will be changed, and changed for the better because of Clive's actions. Clive is shown merely fulfilling his role in life, which is to conquer in the name of British interests. He is merely "one humble instrument, to whose hand is committed the beginning of the end, and who can say when that may be?" (p. 340) This is stressed again much later when Ralph takes leave of him before sailing for England. "Tell them all, Ralph," Clive states,

"that I think, work, and live only for the glory of England, and that this victory is but a step to a dominion at which the world shall marvel hereafter -the thin end of the wedge, which I will drive as far as I can, and which others will drive home." (p. 376)

In these statements on Britain's imperial destiny in India, and Clive's role in it, Taylor was reflecting nineteenth-century appraisals of and justifications for eighteenth-century events. The actual causes, and results of the Battle of Plassey were less grandiose, less certain, even less clear than suggested in these sweeping pronouncements. Initially British rule meant some benefit and much profit for a few of the British (though not their governments), and mainly burden for the Indians. Taylor himself was all too aware of the deficiencies of British attitudes and behaviour in India, and he could criticise the oppressive rule of many past and contemporary administrators. Nevertheless he had a strong belief in the necessity of British rule in India, and this is what informs his account of Clive's actions and what is used to disguise the rapacious nature of Clive's contemporaries. It is all part and parcel of the main premise of the work, that only out of such testing events could men such as Ralph come who did manage to rule India wisely. This is particularly stressed in the concluding section of the novel, where Taylor praises the men who fulfilled their role in the British Empire. "I believe," he writes,

that many of our earlier Indian servants had their sore trials, and that out of them grew that devotion to India and its people which only ceased with life. By such men was the power of England established there; and as a glorious company, peace and honour be to their memories! (p. 449-450)

While both Clive and Ralph are seen as idealised figures fulfilling their imperial destiny, Siraj-ud-daula, the Indian nawab of Bengal, is viewed in an opposite light. Historical opinion of Siraj has never been kind; indeed the tendency, particularly among imperialist minded commentators, has been to cast him in the darkest light possible. One popular writer characterised him as "a perfectly infamous young man," of whom "no one, apparently, had a good word to say..., except those amongst whom he spent a vicious, deprived life."²⁷ This is echoed by another contemporary historian, who commented that of Siraj

neither his Indian nor English contemporaries have a good word to say. The French, who knew him best, considered his chief characteristics to be cruelty, rapacity and cowardice.²⁸

An equally damaging assessment claimed that Siraj was no different from other eighteenth century Indian princes: after all, "Nearly all the notable men of that age lived vicious lives, stained by gross sensuality, ruthless cruelty, and insatiable greed."²⁹

More impartial assessments have pointed to Siraj's extreme youth and lack of education to account for his irresponsible statesmanship. A late nineteenth-century critic, for example, saw Siraj rather as a weak and spoilt prince who had vast powers suddenly thrust upon him. "Without experience and without stability of character," he noted, "suddenly called upon to administer the fairest provinces of India and to assume irresponsible power, what wonder that he should have inaugurated his accession by acts of folly?"³⁰ Likewise a modern assessment notes: "Denied by his youth the experience to cure his faults and by circumstances the security which would in time have

provided it, he acted on a series of contradictory impulses which combined to compass his ruin."³¹

Taylor's own assessment is set in the same mold used to characterise the Indian ruler Tipu Sultan in his earlier work Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War. (And once again Taylor presents the historical figure in conjunction with a fictional character, in this case Sozun, the Afghan warrior and mistress to the nawab.) Both Tipu and Siraj-ud-daula are Indian despots with unstable characters and a penchant for cruelty and debauchery. Both also suffer from guilty consciences that cause enormous loss of sleep, particularly towards the end of the respective novels when defeat by the British is imminent.

Siraj, however, unlike Tipu, is seen as being without any redeeming qualities whatsoever. Even his closest companions acknowledge this. Sozun, for example, the dancing girl closest and dearest to his heart, treads warily in dealing with him due to his unstable nature. Her appraisal of his character is unequivocal and uncompromising:

She knew his heart to be cruel, rapacious, vindictive, insolent, and tyrannical. A coward, a profligate, and a traitor, she could not conceal from herself that he might some day turn on her unexpectedly, and destroy her as he had destroyed others. (p. 207)

Siraj's cruelty is demonstrated when he has a fakir's ears cut off for predicting an inauspicious future for his endeavours against the British. The scene recalls a similar one in Tippoo Sultaun where Tipu corners a baby elephant, has it tied down and then decapitated. In this case, though, it is the fakir who is the victim. "Cut off his

ears -there, before me as he stands," Siraj orders savagely, and it is done. (p. 217) The fakir is seized and,

before he could speak -he was pinioned, dragged back a few paces, and mutilated with a sharp knife. Bleeding and faint, he was buffeted into the outer court, and thence pushed into the street, followed by mocking shouts. (p. 218)

In the end the fakir has his revenge, for it is in his hut that Siraj takes refuge after fleeing the battlefield of Plassey. The fakir immediately seizes him and brings him to Mir Jafar's court, where demands for the Nawab's execution are promptly carried out. This episode supposedly has some factual basis to it, as various historical accounts suggest that the Nawab was betrayed by a fakir with whom he had taken refuge. One contemporary Indian account even went so far as to suggest that the fakir had at one point been employed by Siraj-ud-daula. "It is said," the account states, "that the darwesh [dervish] had been a servant of Siraju-d daula (sic), and, being ignominiously turned out by him for some fault, he had become a fakir, and taken up his abode in this jungle."³² Whatever the case may be, Taylor uses it as a way of neatly tying up the plot: justice is exacted by a previous sufferer of Siraj's cruelty.

Sozun's fate, however, is different. An Afghan girl found orphaned on a battlefield at the age of eleven, she is brought up by a band of gypsies to be a dancing girl, and eventually enters the royal harem, where she is noticed by the young Siraj-ud-daula, who makes her his favourite concubine upon his succession to the throne. Her skills are not limited to dancing, for she soon proves herself a fierce warrior, ably commanding a group of Afghan fighters in various battles. After Siraj's defeat at Plassey she accompanies him in his flight, but is unable to prevent his capture and execution. In the end Sozun

becomes a religious mendicant, dedicating her life to charitable work.

Sozun is one of the more developed characters in the work, sharing certain qualities in common with many of the other female Indian protagonists in Taylor's fiction. Taylor seemed particularly fond of presenting strong, independently minded women in his novels, chief among them being Seeta and Tara in the respective eponymous works. All of them stand out for their beauty, which, not surprisingly, just happens to fit European tastes. The gypsies who capture Sozun on the battlefield remark upon her form, face and skin colour, which, even at her young age, are quite astonishing. Her brown eyes flash, her teeth are white and sparkle and, most importantly, her skin is white and soft.

In fact, Sozun is so remarkably fair that at one point, in the midst of battle, she is mistaken by Ralph for an Englishwoman. Seeing a "fair red-cheeked girl, richly dressed," he reflects, "There's no Englishwoman among them surely?" (p. 233) "No," Taylor interjects quickly, "it was no English woman; but the Affghan (sic) girl Sozun, who unable to contain her excitement, had been in the front on an elephant...." (p. 233)

Sozun, as just demonstrated, is quite excitable, a quality she shares with Taylor's other heroines. She is not afraid to don men's clothing and meet danger in battle, inspired by past tales of similar deeds performed by women (much as Seeta does in Taylor's later work):

There was many a tale and legend she knew, in which women of her own mountains had cheered men on to victory with shrill cries, and had even led them sword in hand -which were sung round rude fireplaces when the snow fell, or at the house-

mill in the early morning, when meal was ground for the days' cakes. (p. 239)

It is significant that both Ralph Darnell, and Cyril Brandon in the later work Seeta, are saved in battle by the heroism and bravery of Sozun and Seeta respectively. In the case of Sozun it serves as an excuse to bring Ralph in contact with a side of Indian society he hasn't seen before, and it also helps the plot by providing some romantic spice. Meadows Taylor cuts off the budding romance between Ralph and Sozun before it can shock his readers too much and conveniently substitutes a more suitable Indian partner.

Ralph's marriage to the Begum Noor-ool-Nissa, widow of Siraj-ud-daula, proves an interesting aspect of the work. Very few twentieth-century critics, though, have bothered to notice it, perhaps because the plot machinations caused most of them to give up reading the novel through to the end. Bhupal Singh, for example, in his seminal survey on Anglo-Indian fiction, makes no mention of the interracial relationships which are developed in the last third of the novel.³³ A recent critic even goes so far as to create his own version of the ending. In trying to establish that Ralph encounters many pressures against his marriage from the Anglo-Indian community, the critic writes:

Yet when the Begum dies and Ralph transfers his affections to Sozun, the protagonist experiences all the resistance which prejudice was capable of exercising. The only way in which he can maintain his relationship with her upon returning to England, is to smuggle her back and live with her in strictest seclusion and secrecy.³⁴

This is a clear misrepresentation of the plot. What actually occurs is quite the reverse. Initially it is with Sozun whom Ralph falls in love. During his convalescence under Sozun's care, Ralph slowly

falls under the spell of her simple charm and beauty, and soon

little was wanting then for Ralph Smithson to have told the girl he loved her, and to have asked her to share his life. Many an Englishman had done the same, and lived happily; and who at home cared for him now? (p. 328)

Sozun, sensing his feelings, rejects him before he can propose to her, explaining that he must wait for someone more worthy of his love: "Mine hath been a hard, shameless life; and such as thou shouldst mate with must be pure as snow." (ibid) It is significant that here Meadows Taylor carefully emphasizes the purity and goodness of Ralph, which even Indian characters recognize and are careful to respect. Sozun, the sullied but virtuous Indian, places herself out of the way and eventually matches Ralph with a suitably pure mate. Sozun then becomes a "fakeerin", dedicating herself to serving God in atonement for her past sins.

Once Ralph decides to marry Noor-ool-Nissah, there is little complaint from his fellow countrymen. The one slight rebuke Ralph receives is from his former commanding officer Robert Clive, who tempers his words with an acknowledgement of the excellence of Ralph's choice:

I'd rather you'd chosen an English girl, Ralph, as I have done...but after all, this is honest and above board, and, considering all things, I think, were I you, I'd do the same. You at least know what she is, and there's no disgrace in marrying a lady of rank, with a handsome dowry to boot. (p. 439)

It is true that the story does involve the smuggling back to Britain and seclusion of the object of Ralph's love. But the incident is more bizarre than we would expect. Ralph does not smuggle a new lover back to England, but instead brings back the embalmed corpse of his wife in a wooden casket. He places her in a

secluded room, which he secretly visits until his death (in her embalmed arms) twenty years later.

This incident was in fact based on a true story, according to Taylor's letters. On sending the third volume of the manuscript to Blackwood's in September 1865, Taylor explained, "What I have made the ending I remember to have read somewhere of an old Indian officer who lived a secluded life in a house near Kensington, and I thought such an ending would not be inappropriate to a life like Ralph's."³⁵ Three months later Taylor again referred to the incident, noting, "The final scene I remember to have read somewhere, & it always made a great impression on me."³⁶ As already seen, twentieth-century critics have been more impervious to its impressionability.

Ideal qualities mark Ralph Darnell's Indian wife, Noor-ool-Nissah, which help justify Ralph's marriage to her, particularly in view of nineteenth-century feelings regarding miscegenation. In general, nineteenth-century Victorian Anglo-Indian society recognized but disapproved of the fact that British and Indian relations were more relaxed and friendly in the eighteenth century. Such behaviour was ascribed to a lack of morality and religion, as one observer commented:

The earliest settlers were indolent, dissipated, grasping, almost Orientals in their way of life, and almost heathens in the matter of religion. But each generation of their successors is more simple, more hardy, more Christian than the last.³⁷

Anglo-Indian novels on eighteenth-century India which incorporated successful interracial marriages between Christian British men and "heathen" Indian women, such as Ralph Darnell, could be tolerated because they were buttressed by historical precedents. There is

evidence, for example, that Meadows Taylor modelled the relationship in Ralph Darnell upon his grandfather-in-law, General William Palmer, the most important clue being a description towards the end of the novel of a painting done of Ralph Smithson and his Indian wife:

An English gentleman, in the red uniform coat and laced and frilled costume of the day, is sitting on a low couch in an Eastern room, and a fair, beautiful woman, in a simple native dress of plain white muslin, is looking up to him from the ground where she is sitting with a look of loving truth and quiet happiness, exquisitely depicted. (p. 437)

This is an exact description of a portrait done of General William Palmer and his Indian wife by Zoffany, a popular Anglo-Indian painter of the late eighteenth century.³⁸ The connection between Ralph Darnell and William Palmer is further attested to by members of the Palmer family, according to a study published in 1951.³⁹

The subject of native mistresses is also touched upon briefly in Ralph Darnell. On his arrival in Calcutta Ralph is befriended by a trader, Mr. Wharton, who invites him to stay at his home. When he moves in Ralph finds a peculiar situation at hand, for although the trader's wife is British, his children are not. When they run to greet their father, they do so "with a merry greeting in their native Hindustani." (p. 227) Their mother, "a graceful native lady of middle age," having borne Mr. Wharton three children, is put aside when he marries a white woman. (p. 228) And although the relationship is supposedly over, this does not prevent tension from building up between the Whartons, for not only is Mrs. Wharton unable to deal with the children, who do not speak her language, but she remains unsure of her husband's faithfulness to and love for her. At one point, suspecting her husband of going off to see the 'other' woman, she breaks down and cries. "Oh that I should have to bear this, and

for a black woman too!," she exclaims to Ralph. "Is it fair, Mr. Smithson, after all his promises? Is it honourable?" (p. 228) Taylor hastens to add that Mr. Wharton is true to his word, but while doing so he takes the opportunity to philosophise on the importance such ties played in the past and on the impact miscegenation might have had in modern times. "What have we to do with the past," he begins,

or with the connections which were matters of ordinary daily life in those days in India? There are some even now that say we are none the better there that they do not exist; and that in losing them we loosed one of the surest ties which bound us to the country and the people. (p. 228)

Such positive views on interracial relations, however, were not shared by many of Taylor's readers, as Taylor realised when he began writing Seeta, which dealt with miscegenation and the Indian "Mutiny" of 1857. Taylor is forced by convention to end the work on a tragic note, for what was possible in eighteenth-century society has become unwelcome a century later.

Ralph Darnell shows Taylor weakening in his writing. In seeking to make his work more popular he strays from the areas he excels in, mainly descriptions of Indian ways and scenery. But even the descriptions of India in Ralph Darnell are dull compared to the strong and clear impressions presented in Tara, although not as dull as those of Taylor's last work, A Noble Queen. (A point which will be discussed in a later section.) Nevertheless they better by far the clumsy imitations of Thackeray's England that make the first half of the work so difficult to read. "What a romance is the early history of the merchant English in Bengal!" Taylor writes halfway through the novel. (p. 198) The romance, however, comes too late.

Notes

1. Blackwood Papers, Ms. 4194, ff. 7-8.
2. Percival Spear, The Oxford History of Modern India 1740-1975, 2nd ed., 1984, 35.
3. Percival Spear, The Nabobs, London: Curzon Press, 1980, 24.
4. Spear, The Nabobs, 26.
5. Spear, Oxford History of Modern India, 21-22.
6. Ibid., 35.
7. James Mill, The History of British India, 3 ed., 1858, vol III, 118. (His comments, however, were more a reflection on much later events; they expressed a general attitude felt about India in light of the Indian "Mutiny" of 1857.)
8. Spear, The Nabobs, 27.
9. Lord Macaulay, "Lord Clive," Edinburgh Review, Jan. 1840, collected in Historical Essays London & Glasgow: Collins' Clear-Type Press, n.p., 609.
10. Paul Edwards, ed., The Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, London, 1969, 149-150.
11. Blackwood Papers, Ms. 4194, ff. 10-11.
12. The Athenaeum, 1994 (Jan 13 1866): 48.
13. Spectator, 38(2), 1956 (Dec 23 1865): 1439.
14. P.M. Taylor, Ralph Darnell, 2nd ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879, 85-86.
15. Robert Lee Wolff, comp., Nineteenth century Fiction: A Bibliographical Catalogue Based on the Collection Formed by Robert Lee Wolff, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985, Vol. IV, R-Z, 188.
16. Blackwood Papers, Ms. 4216, ff. 1-2.
17. G.O. Trevelyan, The Competition Wallah, 150.
18. Ralph Darnell, 12. (All further references to Ralph Darnell are noted in the text.)
19. Blackwood Papers, Ms. 4205, ff. 51-52.
20. Ibid.
21. Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 2nd rev. ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, 55.

22. Ibid.
23. J.H. Raleigh, "Victorian Morals & the Modern Novel," in Ian Watt, ed., The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, 465.
24. P.M. Taylor, The Story of my Life, 2nd ed., London & Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1878, 464.
25. Ibid., 430.
26. Ibid., 464.
27. Flora Annie Steel, India Through the Ages, 5th ed., London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., [1938], 269.
28. Sir George Dunbar, A History of India, 2nd ed., London: Nicholson & Watson, Ltd., 1939, 338.
29. Vincent Smith & S.M. Edwardes, The Oxford History of India, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941, 487.
30. G.B. Malleson, The Decisive Battles of India, 2nd ed., London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1885, 43.
31. Percival Spear, Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1975, 22-23.
32. "Chahar Gulzar Shuja-I of Hari Charan Das," in Elliot, H.M., and John Dowson, ed., Studies in Indian History, pt. III, 2nd ed., 1954, 55.
33. (For Bhupal Singh's discussion of Meadows Taylor's writings see his work A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, 42-52.
34. B.J. Moore-Gilbert, Kipling and "Orientalism", London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, 52.
35. Blackwood Papers, Ms. 4205, ff. 43-44.
36. Ibid., ff. 61-62. [A possible source for this episode is noted in H.A. Stark's Hostages to India, a short study on the history of the Anglo-Indian (i.e., Eurasian) community. Mentioning the story, found in Henry Lawrence's An Adventurer in the Punjab, of a British officer who kept the embalmed corpse of his Indian wife in his home in Surrey, he quotes: "Major H. was an officer in the King's service, who served in the Madras Presidency, something like thirty or forty years ago. He became attached to a native lady, named Fyzoo; never I believe regarded her with any but honourable views, and married her. She bore him three children (one of whom is now an officer in the army), and died leaving the youngest an infant, who bore her mother's name. Major H. quitted India upon the death of his wife, and brought her remains with him to England in a leaden coffin. Shortly

after his arrival, the little Fyzoo died, and her father had her remains in the same manner preserved....it was not generally known that in that old house he kept enshrined the bodies of his wife and daughter. In a room within his own a bed was laid out, covered with rich Indian silks, and fancifully decorated. On that bed lay the mother and child in their long best sleep: and in this room Major H. passed the greater part of his time." (Stark, p. 24-26.)]

37. G.O. Trevelyan, The Competition Wallah, 238.
38. (A reproduction of the painting appears between p. 120 and 121 in Ballhatchet's Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj.
39. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, Philip Meadows Taylor: A Critical Study, Bombay: New Book Co., Ltd., 1951, 152.

6. SEETA

Seeta completes the trilogy of novels which Taylor wrote to illustrate what he considered to be events in Indian history of "the highest importance and interest."¹ Having dealt with the birth of the Marathan confederacy and with the Battle of Plassey in his previous works, Tara and Ralph Darnell respectively, Taylor now set out to portray the "Mutiny" of 1857, a subject he felt to be "incomparably the most difficult of the series."² In his autobiography Taylor explains that the novel was meant to "illustrate the attempts of all classes alike to rid themselves of the English by the Mutiny of 1857."³ As Patrick Brantlinger has pointed out, the suggestion that the Mutiny was not restricted to a minority group of soldiers and native princes, but was a reaction affecting "all classes alike", was, for its time, remarkable. In this sense, to quote Dr. Brantlinger, "Seeta offers the most fully imagined account in any Victorian novel both of the scope and of the motives for the Mutiny."⁴

It is widely agreed that the Mutiny began at Meerut in May 1857 as a revolt among native Indian troops over the issue of cartridges which were rumoured to be coated with pork and cow fat. The greased cartridges issue, however, is generally considered merely the flashpoint for long simmering unrest among native regiments. As S.N. Sen points out, "An atmosphere of distrust and suspicion had been created by a series of well-intentioned but ill-judged legislative and administrative measures which shook to its very core the sepoys'

faith in the bona fides of the Sarkar [Government], and successive Governor-Generals contributed unconsciously to the steady deterioration of public confidence in their good faith."⁵ This distrust of new government policies, Sen felt, had prompted small revolts amongst various native regiments throughout the first half of 1857, all of which had been quickly suppressed. In January soldiers at Dum-Dum refused to take the newly issued cartridges during artillery drill because of rumours regarding the mixture of greases used on them. In March an entire regiment was disbanded at Barrackpur in response to a similar protest. A more serious incident occurred in March at Berhampur, when a young sepoy, Mangal Pande (referred to in Seeta and other contemporary works as Mungul Pande), attacked his commanding officer and called on his fellow sepoys to mutiny. Although none joined him few made any effort to dissuade him from making his appeal.

In spite of these danger signs, the British government relied on repression and did little to calm sepoy fears about the cartridge issue. Strong action was taken against any regiment that questioned British orders concerning the cartridges, including disbandment. This led ultimately to the incidents of May 1857, when the public degrading and shackling of a group of sepoys in Meerut who had refused to accept the new cartridges sparked the mutiny of the native cavalry regiment stationed there. The mutineers rose up against their British officers, freed the prisoners, and rode off to Delhi. There, joined by the local Indian garrison, they declared Bahadur Shah, the eighty-two year old Moghul emperor, their leader. With the reluctant octogenarian as a rallying point for hopeful rebels, revolts spread

quickly, primarily through the northwestern regions of India. The south saw little action. It was areas such as Oudh, the Marathan States, Jhansi, and Cawnpore that witnessed the most widespread and bitter fighting against the British. In these areas the mutiny turned into a civil rebellion, with factions from many orders of society (the aristocracy, the landowners and peasants), participating. For a while British authority in these areas disappeared, successor governments being set up, in most cases, under old traditional rulers.⁶

These rulers were not always very effective, and the disunity among the rebels, who suffered from a lack of effective leadership and failed to find a sense of common purpose, led ultimately to disarray and defeat. After the storming of Delhi by British-led troops in September 1857, it was only a matter of time before the total suppression of the rebellion. But it was not until April 1859, with the capture of the rebel leader Tantia Tope, that the last traces of resistance were considered eliminated.⁷

A feature of the outbreak was a level of ferocity from both sides that, as one commentator has noted, "took on some of the characteristics of a race war."⁸ Both the rebels and the British who fought them were quick to attribute malevolence to anyone differing from them in colour, regardless of previously professed sympathies and with consequent murderous results. Both sides killed indiscriminately, often in response to rumours of atrocities committed by the opposite side. The British would rage at accounts of massacres of British men and women, many of which were fabricated or embellished for maximum effect. The Cawnpore massacre of July 1857,

when over 200 British men, women and children were slaughtered by men under Nana Sahib's command, was one such incident which galvanized the British forces fighting in India.

But underneath the rhetoric of righteous revenge lay another feeling which rankled even more: the feeling of betrayal. This was most commonly expressed by British officers, who had come to regard their native recruits as faithful, reliable allies. That many would dare rise up against those who had thought of themselves as a father to their men was a shocking thought. What this ignored was that such a paternalistic view, which often ignored sepoy grievances, may have caused such unrest in the first place. The sepoy, one twentieth-century commentator has suggested, was "a friend to whom some were indifferent, over whom others had been sentimental."⁹ The result was that "everyone had taken him for granted."¹⁰ Here was another reason for "the relentless fury with which the English waged this war, if it can be called a war, a fury for which there is no parallel in their long history."¹¹

Furious reactions were not confined to the British. The rebels reacted to stories of atrocities committed against Indians, such as the ones soon after the outbreak at Allahabad and Benares, and would pass on accounts of Hindus and Muslims being defiled by such methods as being sewn into cowhide or pigskin sacks. In the case of these Indians, rebellion was a defense of the sanctity of their religion.

One of the central themes explored in Seeta is the role of religion for both Indian and British participants in the Mutiny. Taylor suggests that religious misunderstanding not only helped to cause the outbreak of 1857, but also, more generally, shaped

nineteenth-century British attitudes to India and its people. For Indians, Taylor believed, religious fears were among the main causes of the unrest of 1857. He was one of the few of his time to argue that the unrest could be seen, in this light, as a struggle by traditionalism against modernity, "a combination to regain what had been lost." (Seeta, p. viii]) The introduction of social and economic changes, occurring over a short period of time, had an impact on the religious life of the Indian people, which was seen by many Indians as an insidious attempt to destroy their society as a whole. "These are but new devices," Taylor describes the people as saying in A Student's Manual of the History of India, "for the domination of their rule, and are aimed at the destruction of our national faith, caste, and customs!"¹² Taylor suggests in Seeta that religion was the unifying element for all the grievances and fears underlying the Mutiny, for "priests, merchants, artisans, farmers, and soldiers were alike affected." (p. 145) Those who sought to exploit the situation, like the novel's designated villain, rebel leader Azrael Pande, needed to use only one word to galvanize the population against the British -pollution. For

The terror of pollution came home with fearful force alike to every Hindoo, of every caste, and to all Mahomedans. Pollution could not be escaped; it could not be remedied. It concerned both the bold and the timid; and even the most timid grew bold under the influence of the new and possible danger. (p. 145)

While serving in India during the Mutiny Taylor had not been so understanding of the causes for the disturbances. In uncharacteristically chauvinistic language, he described the revolt as no less than an outbreak "of savagery against civilisation," a view prevalent among many Anglo-Indians of the time.¹³

"Civilisation," he went on to say, "is pressing hard on Hindooism [sic], perhaps also on Mohammedanism...that amount of civilisation...has proved progression of knowledge to be incompatible with Hindooism, and to be sapping its very existence."¹⁴ Doubtless this reflected the prevailing view that the disturbances resulted from religious agitation in the ranks of the army. Many at the time suggested that other non-religious factions who joined the ranks of Sepoys were merely capitalising on the anarchic state of the affected provinces to settle old scores or plunder the countryside. A typical example of this argument can be found in this shrill portrayal of the aftermath of the uprising at Delhi in a popular history of the British Empire, published in 1862: "All the robbers of the neighbourhood were encouraged by the mutineers, as at Meerut, to help themselves. The banks and rich shops were plundered; women were treated with indignity, and tortured to death or hacked to pieces."¹⁵ S. N. Sen, in discussing incidents of purely mercenary behaviour during the Mutiny, points out that, although there were certain incidents of this type of behaviour, such cases were exceptions. "Even if we make due allowance for these uncertain elements," he notes, "the revolt commanded popular support in varying degrees in the principal theatre of war, which extended roughly from western Bihar to the eastern confines of the Punjab."¹⁶

Taylor's own harsh views on the outbreak had changed by the time he came to write Seeta between 1871 and 1872. He had by then reassessed the likely causes of disaffection. The result stands in sharp contrast to other contemporary views on the subject. For example, Taylor offers an ambivalent and conflicting characterisation

of the novel's antagonist, the fanatical Brahmin priest and rebel leader Azrael Pande.

In the preface Taylor explains that Azrael is meant to be an exemplification of evil; he is a representative of "the character of the rebel and treasonable emissaries of the time"; he belongs to the type who were "malignant and persistent," and "led on by blind hatred and religious fanaticism." (p. ix) Our initial impression of Azrael is not a favourable one. He is portrayed as a former Thug now leading a group of armed bandits in raids on rich villagers. He soon gives this up, however, to turn to more political work, spreading sedition while disguised as a Hindu priest and worshipper of the goddess Kali. His former Thuggee ways are obviously too deeply rooted for him to give them up entirely! While Azrael seems to have the genuinely revolutionary intent of overthrowing the British, his character soon degenerates, and he lapses into a drug-dependent, bloodthirsty, fanatical state, alternating between sacrificing to Kali and raving against the British hero, Cyril, and his Indian wife, Seeta. At one point a former disciple finds Azrael alternately praising and cursing Seeta in language more akin to bad drama. "Seeta! Seeta!" Azrael initially murmurs,

O beloved, come to me! O beloved, give me thy love, as thou hast mine! O lotos feet; I hear the sound of thy softly tinkling anklets! O lithe and swaying form advancing with dainty steps, I would embrace thee! O sweet Chumpa blossom, thy luscious perfume reaches me! I live, I drink it in! Seeta, I die! Come, touch me and this agony will cease.
(p.300)

This soft entreaty is soon replaced by curses: "Ah, witch, sorceress!...polluted as thou art, come to me! Seeta, dost thou not hear? Whither wouldst thou fly? Harlot! I will defile thee! I will

crush thee! Thou shalt be my slave; and thy paramour Brandon shall not save thee from Azrael Pande!" (p. 300)

This degeneration in character, and the sexual threat it represents to Seeta, is reminiscent of similar portrayals of Indian villains in Taylor's earlier works Tippoo Sultaun and Tara. Equally villainous types are also to be found in Taylor's subsequent work A Noble Queen, in the form of Osman Beg and Dom Diego (a point discussed in the next chapter). In all these works, the designated antagonists are seen as unstable characters, their few good qualities not enough to prevent them from degenerating into stereotypical melodramatic villains. As already mentioned in an earlier section, Tipu Sultaun is seen as a rather sadistic despot, wantonly and cruelly attacking defenseless elephants and bulls. In Tara, we find that Moro Trimmul is very like Azrael: both are Hindu priests well versed in the ancient scriptures; both are good orators; both are obsessed with the beautiful Indian heroines of the works, Tara and Seeta respectively; and for both their evil natures ultimately prove their downfall, for they die trying to possess and degrade the Indian heroines. In Tara, Moro is killed while Tara is being rescued from the funeral pyre, while in Seeta, Azrael is killed during an attack on the hero, Cyril (but not before Seeta dies, taking the thrust of Azrael's spear).

This puts an interesting twist on a racial stereotype found in other Anglo-Indian works of the late nineteenth century. Azrael is sexually profligate, lusting after the innocent Seeta. His sexual threat reflects an image of Indians perpetuated by British novelists who wished to sustain a view of the "Otherness" of India. The

emphasis on Indian sexual decadence, as one academic notes, "served to confirm the moral superiority of the British and the need for racial purity. In particular, the defenceless body of the white memsahib was used as an image to propel the narrative towards self-righteous indignation against the imagined desires of the Indian."¹⁷ Taylor, though, adapts the image to fit his works: Azrael is still a sexual threat, but in this case he menaces the Indian heroine, Seeta, for whom Cyril must act as protector. By altering this image, Taylor avoids giving the conduct of either Azrael or Cyril a simple racial basis in the way that such images were used for by other novelists writing on India.

One might think that Taylor's perspective leaves nothing positive to be said about Azrael's character. But in fact the portrait is leavened with some surprising touches. The eloquent and powerful language Taylor uses for Azrael's insurrection speeches, for example, undercut his professed rejection of the character. As one American critic suggests, Azrael's impassioned rhetoric is less that of a fanatic than of "an Indian Patrick Henry."¹⁸ In one particular speech to the Thirty-fourth Native Infantry at Barrackpur, the regiment in which the previously mentioned Mungul Pande had served, Azrael denounces the British for their harsh treatment of native rulers, their "greed of dominion" which leads them to seize even the kingdoms of such faithful allies as the Rajah of Jhansi and the Rajah of Oudh. (p. 148) As he expands his argument, he touches on the most important issue of all, religion. He begins to exploit the rumours regarding the greased cartridges, which implied defilement for both Muslims and Hindus, to exhort the soldiers to revolt, and it is this issue that

most stirs his listeners. "What did I hear the Brahmins in the temple of Kalee...say among themselves, and to us strangers?" Azrael asks rhetorically:

'Come here no more!' they cried. 'The order is gone out from the new Lord Sahib, that all Hindoos must become Christians, for the Queen of England has so determined. Come no more!' they cried, beating their mouths and their breasts; 'this day -any day- the holy temple of the Mother whom we serve, may be defiled with cow's blood!' (p. 149)

The fear of defilement this statement occasions among Azrael's listeners is further inflamed by a denunciation of the new regulations regarding conditions of military service, which included orders to serve overseas if necessary. "We soldiers used to feel that we were safe against going over the sea." Azrael argues. "Now I hear on every hand, a groan of despair that you are no longer safe; that when the order comes, you must go over the black water, which washes out all trace of caste." (p. 149) That many soldiers in the Indian Army feared this new regulation has often been noted and cited as a possible factor contributing to their eventual rebellion. As one critic remarks, "This threatened the orthodox Hindus with complete loss of caste quite as much as the grease on the new cartridges."¹⁹

But Azrael does not confine his remarks to a denunciation of British insensitivity to Indian religious practices. He also urges his listeners to consider the manner in which the British government was transforming India through economic and technological changes. He castigates such matters as new levies on salt and opium, and he challenges the ways in which Indian industry and agriculture were being subordinated to the need to accommodate the British manufacturers' demands for raw materials, thus anticipating the arguments of many twentieth-century Indian nationalists. While there

is no evidence that Taylor had read Karl Marx's economic critiques of Britain's role in India, Azrael's arguments are remarkably Marxist, particularly when he describes the East India Company as "a mean, cheating robber, who farms this great Hind of ours from the Government of England, and robs it of all it can carry away. Where do those great ships yonder," he continues,

take the cotton, and the indigo, and the silk which the poor ryots have produced, but to England? Do they bring us anything in return? No! nothing but what we have to buy, and very dearly; and even the old Moghuls did not tax our salt and opium. (p. 147-8)

A similar statement is made elsewhere by another 'rebel leader', who denounces the British as men who "now are not like their former princely heroes; they are a mean, covetous race; farming our country from their Government, seizing every scrap of land, every rupee of revenue they can, to swell their enormous gains." (p. 411)

Taylor, of course, quickly glosses over the implications of such arguments regarding Britain's role in India. As he makes clear throughout the work, he is not one to concede that Britain's rule of India is a mistake. He does suggest, however, that many of Azrael Pande's grievances have validity. Throughout Seeta we find criticisms not only of general Anglo-Indian attitudes to India and its people but also of specific British actions. The British protagonists in Seeta concede that contemporary British actions leave much to be desired. At one point one of Cyril, Brandon's friends, Philip Mostyn, voices his dissatisfaction over the policies of the government. "I hate these new-fangled laws," he confesses to Cyril, "can't they let the people alone?" (p. 163) He finds the unrest among the sepoys

quite understandable, for "between you and me, they don't ever grumble for nothing." (p. 162-63)

This echoes similar nineteenth-century criticisms of British policy in India. Many critics, both Indian and British, condemned the manner in which the British authorities had undertaken the annexation of several princely states, by assuming control of them after the death of their childless monarchs (the policy of lapse). In Seeta Taylor includes a sympathetic portrayal of one monarch who had lost the rule of her state due to this policy, the Rani of Jhansi. Taylor felt, as did many of his British contemporaries, that the annexation of Jhansi after the death of the Rajah in 1853, who left no direct male heir, had been a mistake, and he portrays the Rani as a reluctant rebel holding legitimate grievances against the British administration: "We loved the English; we hoisted their flag over our own; and it would have been there now, had their old justice been continued to us." (p. 411) However, the Rani continues, "The English, with all the empire of Dehly belonging to them, refused to continue what they themselves had once granted to us freely and generously." (p. 411) Thus, the Rani argues, she had no choice but to rise up against them.²⁰

Another point which was subject to much criticism was the manner of the clumsy takeover of Oudh in 1856, where frustration over a corrupt and lax government led the British to revoke their treaty obligations to a faithful ally. These actions were held to have aroused the fears of many Indian princes and state rulers, who supposedly interpreted them as signs that the British would topple even allies in a bid to control all of India. As one recent analyst

has noted, "Colour was therefore given to the fear that annexation would not stop short at subordinate states, and that if one pretext would not serve another would be found."²¹ Furthermore, Indian religious fears were exacerbated by the aggressive proselytism of many British missionaries and Christian-minded military and civilian leaders, whose actions led many Indians to believe that the British government was actively encouraging the religious conversion of all its subjects.²²

All this is held to explain the strong hatred of the British evident among many groups during the Mutiny. Azrael Pande's motives chime well with those rebels, for whom, in the words of Bernard Porter, "British policy appeared as a deliberate attempt to seize their lands, humiliate their rulers, impoverish their people, subvert their customary ways of life and destroy their religions, often in the teeth of solemn promises not to do so, by a group of infidels with dubious motives and unpleasant manners."²³

Certainly Taylor is sympathetic to the sepoys's problems, and his Mutineers are depicted as being, in the words of one critic, "good men goaded to rebellion by the dread of losing caste."²⁴ Yet while Taylor is prepared to allow some cause to the initial unrest, this stops short of justifying the elimination of British rule over India. The lesson to be learned is of the need for more understanding on the part of the British. He sees the issue as being one where more sympathetic government by more sympathetic administrators is needed. As one critic has perceptively noted, "Taylor understood that the Mutiny was partly a reaction against British attempts to reform or eradicate Indian customs and to convert Indians to Christianity, but

he also believed that the work of men like Brandon was invaluable, and that many Indians appreciated that work."²⁵ It is this which informs his many statements on the importance of respect and courtesy among those working in India. (A point discussed in further detail later on in this chapter.)

The inspiration for Seeta, Taylor wrote, came from a case he tried in 1856. He recalls in his autobiography:

In another case of dacoity which followed, the clear evidence of the widow of the owner of the house attacked, who was a young and very beautiful Brahmin girl, affected me very deeply; and the subject of that trial forms the opening of my romance of 'Seeta.' The deposition of Seeta given at the first inquiry is that of the Brahmin widow, with very slight alteration.²⁶

This suggests that Seeta was an exercise in wish fulfillment on Meadows Taylor's part, and there are, in fact, some interesting parallels between the author and his hero. Cyril Brandon is the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Noorpoor; Meadows Taylor was the temporary Deputy Commissioner based in Nuldroog. Meadows Taylor's duties were much the same as the ones he ascribes to Cyril; and he infuses Cyril with the same strong sense of commitment to his work and to his Indian charges that he himself expresses in his autobiography and his letters.

The plot of Seeta is as charged with drama as that of Ralph Darnell. Seeta's first husband, Huree Das, is killed in a dacoit raid instigated by his cousin Ram Das, and organised by Azrael Pande. Cyril arrives in Seeta's town to try the case and is attracted to her. He leaves, time passes, but soon Cyril has the opportunity of saving Seeta from another attack by Azrael. In this he is wounded and must recover in Seeta's home, which allows him a chance to woo

and win her, with help from Seeta's aunt Ella. Cyril eventually marries Seeta but as a result both are isolated from and rejected by their respective communities. The Mutiny of 1857, around which the novel supposedly revolves, is actually kept very much as a background. Taylor avoids the conventional details of massacres and heroic defences of Delhi or other major towns and instead concentrates on the effect of the Mutiny on a small British station. This allows him to delve more into the small-station mentality which prove such an obstacle to Cyril's marriage. In the end Meadows Taylor disposes of Seeta and the problem of an interracial relationship in the traditional style of bad romances: Seeta dies saving her husband from the fatal thrust of a spear wielded by Azrael Pande. In an 1897 article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Hilda Gregg commented on the abruptness of this ending:

This sudden and violent ending to Brandon's difficulties strikes us as akin to the action of the player who upsets the chessboard because he can see no way of winning; and our resentment is not disarmed by the hero's subsequent marriage, with the approval of all his relations, to the English girl in whom he had been mildly interested before making the acquaintance of Seeta.²⁷

B.J. Moore-Gilbert, analysing the novel in relation to other historical romances of the period, echoes Hilda Gregg when he declares Seeta to be "in the manner of the most sickly romance," and concludes that Meadows Taylor "thus conveniently avoids the necessity of exploring more fully the painful moral and social issues foregrounded by the relationship."²⁹ Clearly what bothers critics most about this ending is Meadows Taylor's inability to transcend the conventions of the historical romance genre of his time. He seems to them to 'duck' the issue of the possibility of successful interracial

marriages by eliminating Seeta before she can pose a real threat to Anglo-Indian conceptions of such liaisons.

But this verdict ignores the amount of time Meadows Taylor spends describing the problems Cyril and Seeta face in their struggle against the prejudices attending their marriage. In his seminal work A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, Bhupal Singh gets closer to Meadows Taylor's main concern in Seeta:

The real interest of the book does not lie in characterization...but in the attitude of the English men and women towards this marriage and in the 'spicy detail of male and female doings and sayings' of this period.²⁹

Critical hostility to the ending is often coupled with equally strong dislike, both from Indian and British critics, of the marriage portrayed. Many British contemporaries of Meadows Taylor's found the marriage between Cyril and Seeta objectionable, and one reviewer for the Calcutta Review of 1873 drew from Seeta's tragic ending a comfortable conclusion concerning such marriages:

We recommend -and we do not understand Colonel Meadows Taylor himself as intending that his book should bear any different moral- that European Judges and Magistrates should look with judicial eyes only on such as Seeta, where by some rare accident they appear before them to give evidence against the murderers of their deceased husbands...-and that, so long as the "maids of Merrie England," and the lassies of Bonnie Scotland are willing to share with us our joys and sorrows in the East, doubtful and dangerous experiments such as Cyril and Seeta made should by all means be avoided.³⁰

But it is only Meadows Taylor's conventional ending which satisfied those who felt such interracial relationships were dangerous to the image of superiority fostered by the British in India, and to the barriers erected to isolate the rulers from the ruled.

A more valid criticism concerning Seeta comes from an Indian critic, who finds the marriage as portrayed less objectionable but more improbable. Seeta, as a Hindu widow, would have been most unlikely to marry anyone, let alone a British administrator, in view of her devotion to her religion. Likewise Seeta's Aunt Ella, herself a Hindu widow, is an improbable character, since "Aunts of her type would rather see their daughters or nieces dead than married to a Christian."³¹ A more moderate consideration is offered by another Indian critic. "Although Seeta is a much idealized character," he writes, "her marriage with the sympathetic Brandon, though perhaps improbable, need not be viewed as preposterous."³²

Interestingly, Taylor presents the Anglo-Indian attitude towards Cyril's marriage, with few exceptions, as a negative one. As is typical of many other Anglo-Indian novels of the period, the women living in Cyril's station are the most shocked and adamantly indignant over the matter. Indeed Meadows Taylor reserves his strongest criticisms of Anglo-Indian attitudes for his characterizations of the local station gossips. At one stage one of Cyril's few supporters, Philip Mostyn, explains to Cyril why his marriage will eventually fail:

It is not attainable...because of our social prejudices, which you and I can't overcome. Because of old Mrs. Grundy, who is as powerful here as elsewhere in the world -more so, perhaps. (p. 87)

The social prejudices of the Mrs. Grundies of the station are further exacerbated by what they perceive as the unnecessary need for Cyril to seek a wife outside the station. Meadows Taylor makes much of the insidiousness and incestuousness of station life, which poisons Anglo-Indian minds and helps preserve the barriers between the Anglo-

Indians and the natives. Anglo-Indian society, as seen in Seeta, is essentially narrowminded, and this accounts for the ultimate failure of Cyril's marriage. As one character explains:

Our perceptions are narrowed with our isolated positions, and become incapable of extension; and because, if a man, one of us, married a native lady -married, I say- he must exclude himself from society, which would require a strong mind; and must undergo temptation if he entered it, which would require even a stronger mind to resist. (p. 87)

The most telling example of how societal pressure works on the characters in Seeta is Philip Mostyn. Initially Philip, while acknowledging that interracial marriages would most likely fail, goes so far as to suggest that such marriages would be superior to ordinary marriages between Anglo-Indians:

I often think, that if there were not our horrible social prejudices against it, many of us would be happier with such a wife than with some of our own people. I think such a one as that girl would be more interesting, more useful, more easily satisfied, and-...as to family considerations, none of us, proud strangers as we may be, need be ashamed of theirs, which are as old, as noble, and as great as our own. (p. 87)

He supports Cyril's marriage until a new arrival at the station, his sister Grace Mostyn, is pushed forward as a more suitable wife for Cyril. At this point Philip Mostyn is soon turned by his wife's opinion on the matter and, like the women of the station, begins to think that Cyril would be better off without Seeta:

Cyril, poor fellow, will get tired of the monotony of that girl, brilliant and wonderful as she is. He will miss the freshness of an English intellect. That pleasant talk under the trees to-day; could that girl have followed what they said? Impossible! And how Cyril was excited, and how well Grace spoke up to all he said. -No! this won't do, it can't last. (p. 196)

Cyril's family in England find much to disapprove of when they learn of Cyril's action. Soon after the marriage Cyril receives a

letter from his brother, Lord Hylton, who affects considerable displeasure at the arrangement:

The person who lives with you under the form of marriage you have patched up may be as beautiful and accomplished as Nourmahal; but I only see in her a designing native of India, who has lured you on till you have committed yourself, and cannot draw back; and from my heart I wish that you had never seen her. She could never take her place as your wife here, and the idea of recognizing such a person as Seeta, as a member of our old family, is, as you must see yourself on reflection, perfectly absurd and impossible. (p. 239)

Similar comments arrive from Cyril's superiors, who base their response on rumours of what they take to be unusually scandalous behaviour on Cyril's part:

In the present excited condition of the native mind, unusual caution is required from us all; but in the deliberate seduction of the granddaughter of a respectable banker, you have not only set our own laws of morality at defiance, but violated those of the natives who have been entrusted to your care. (p. 238)

Thus Cyril faces pressure against his marriage from all directions: his family, his friends, his superiors, and the station community. Seeta equally faces pressure from her family who, as a result of allowing the marriage, must pay penance for breaking caste rules. All the problems are solved in the end by Seeta's death, and Cyril can satisfy everyone by marrying Grace Mostyn.

While Seeta's death proves a convenient end to the work, Seeta herself proves a less conventional subject. Seeta is an idealized heroine, exemplifying a perfect combination of European and Indian characteristics. She is beautiful in a European way and is specifically compared to Old Masters' paintings:

For a native woman, Cyril Brandon had never seen any one so fair or of so tender a tone of colour. Such, he remembered, were many of the lovely women of Titian's pictures -a rich golden olive, with a bright carnation tint rising under the

skin- and Seeta's was like them. One in particular came to his memory like a flash -the wife of the Duc d'Avalos (sic), in the Louvre picture; or Titian's Daughter, carrying fruits and flowers, at Berlin. (p. 61)

Her beauty is enhanced by her purity and innocence, which are characteristics of all good romance heroines, yet unusual for Indian heroines of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian works. These exemplary qualities are highlighted to contrast more effectively with the smallminded attitudes of the Anglo-Indian gossips at Noorpoor. They are also added justifications for considering Seeta as a suitable mate for Cyril, for they match the equally unstained qualities of our British hero. Here, as in Ralph Darnell and Tara, Meadows Taylor emphasises that it is the virtuousness of the hero and heroine which enables them to withstand the tremendous pressures they face in the course of the novel. Cyril and Seeta, however, are virtuous for different reasons. She has the innocence of the child, he of the divinely inspired man. The difference is most clearly demonstrated in a passage where Seeta explains why she is comfortable being with Cyril:

It is because you are good. Children know who are good to them; and I am but a child, for I feel no fear of you -I never felt any; and this is so strange to me. You are English, and people fear you; but I do not....Yes many love you too...but it is a love with fear, and we have no fear. Nor grandfather, nor Aunt Ella, nor my boy, nor I. We only love you and worship you, as we do our gods....You are an incarnation of God's power, and so we would love you and worship you. (p. 109)

Cyril, like the other British heroes in Meadows Taylor's fiction, stands out because he is good, wise and above all respectful of his Indian subjects. He is also an impartial and just representative of

the benevolent British administration, working for the benefit of his subjects without a thought for himself.

Taylor's views on the ideal British administrator, which come out quite forcefully in Seeta, are present in almost all of his works. He castigates those who have no sympathy for the people they are supposedly governing. Taylor was particularly concerned with the lack of respect accorded to Indians by the British. Thus in his autobiography we can find him advising prospective administrators of India to "use true courtesy to natives of all degrees."³³ This advice finds a place in Seeta as well. Cyril succeeds in restoring and maintaining order in his districts because of his understanding of its people. "The secret of his success," Taylor points out, "lay in his true sympathy with all classes, and his ready attention to all demands on his time and patience." (p. 417) Such behaviour is said to mark him out more as a member of the 'old school' of administrators, who developed their understanding of India through direct observation and exposure to its people and customs, rather than those now entrenching themselves "behind native clerks and ministerial officers, and rarely seeing, therefore, with their own eyes, or hearing with their own ears." (p. 418) Taylor is contemptuous of the new breed of administrators making their way to Indian shores, who feel that passing the special examinations at Haileybury College in Britain allows them the right to hold supercilious and haughty views and reject close contact with Indians. "Such men," Taylor intones, "despise native acquaintances, and make no friends." (p. 418) Such attitudes, he also implies, played their part in unleashing the 1857

revolt, for the ill-feeling such behaviour generated contributed to the peoples' grievances.

Taylor's criticisms of such attitudes, however, are still contained within a paternalistic view of Britain's relation to India. The end result of improvements in British attitudes, in Taylor's view, is better British control of Indian subjects. In his autobiography Taylor used his own experiences as an example of the value of courtesy and understanding in administering India, for his work teaches him that "large masses of men are more easily led than driven, and that courtesy and kindness and firmness will gain many a point which, under a hard and haughty bearing, would prove unattainable."³⁴ This sentiment is echoed in Seeta, when Cyril explains to a friend that courtesy, patience and accessibility are the keys to gaining the trust of Indians, for "they are almost like children, you see, easily led, when once they have given their faith." (p. 431)

This view of Indians as children is prevalent among many nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian historical romances. The concept of the Indian as a child, easily led once his confidence is gained, forms an integral part of nineteenth-century British conceptions of the Indian character, and is particularly seen in the writings of such people as Flora Annie Steel and Rudyard Kipling. Taylor's characterisations of Indians, however, goes beyond mere descriptions of them as children. This is true particularly of the portrayals of his female protagonists, who combine innocence with an inner strength and often other, even more unusual qualities which border on the

ideal. This is most evident, as I've noted earlier, when we examine the characterisation of Seeta.

Seeta, as one would expect of an ideal example of an Indian subject, has a childlike innocence which prompts her unquestioning loyalty and love of Cyril. But she also possesses these Indian characteristics along with less intangible Indian qualities. She is tough enough, for example, to ride about with her husband during night patrols:

Dressed in her boy's clothes, she rode her spirited mare gracefully and boldly, and to the admiration of all; and many marvelled to see the girl, apparently so jealously guarded before, throw off the restraint habitual to her countrywomen, and follow her husband in a duty which was never perhaps without danger. (p. 318)

Seeta may be unlike her countrywomen in this action, but she is not unlike other Indian women in Meadows Taylor's novels, most notably Sozun in Ralph Darnell.

Another quality which sets Seeta apart is her intelligence and her eagerness for knowledge. The Brahmin scholars and priests in her village are hard put to equal her understanding of sacred texts. Likewise she is able to confound the wife of the Noorpoor station's resident missionary in discussions on Christianity, to the point where the woman confesses, "I am no match for her in metaphysics." (p. 295) But Seeta's thirst for knowledge leads her, significantly, to discover how much better and more alive English writings are than her native texts. At one point Seeta cries out:

How little do we know of you English...how little of your faith, or your books, teeming with glorious thoughts, and the fresh stores of knowledge that are ever opening to you. While for us -no one ever writes now; no one thinks; we are as the dead, with those whose very language is dead too. (p. 319)

Seeta's death leaves the reader to ponder where Seeta's interest in such matters would have led her. The work implies, however, that a conversion to Christianity may have been possible.

This may have been part of Taylor's attempt to make the marriage more palatable to his readers. Taylor realised that the changed attitudes to India and Indians after the Mutiny made presentations of successful interracial marriages difficult. Thus his emphasis on the Christian possibilities in Seeta. That he did not necessarily believe such marriages could only be successful once Christian conversion had been achieved can be seen in the differing portrayals of interracial marriage in Ralph Darnell and Seeta. In Ralph Darnell, there is little mention of religion. Ralph marries Noor-ool-Nissah in an Indian ceremony. The little religious discussion which occurs between the two characters centres on the Eastern religious and philosophical texts that Ralph begins studying with the help of his wife. In Seeta, by contrast, there is much emphasis on Seeta's potential for conversion to Christianity.

Seeta spends much time studying the Bible, and her study convinces her that the religion of the British, like their literature, is superior to that of her countrymen. She soon finds her Hindu prayers "cold and comfortless" in comparison with Christian ones, and before long the resident missionary's wife confesses to Cyril that in Seeta "there is good seed grown...and it must germinate and grow: and I shall be much mistaken if it does not." (p. 295) In fact Meadows Taylor seems, as one critic wrote, "much too anxious to see the 'good seed' germinate"³⁵, especially when he comments near the novel's end that

Seeta is only a type of thousands and thousands of her own countrymen and women, who feel the truth, and who, until some unforeseen crisis in their lives arises, dare not make the final plunge which not only severs them from all they love, honour, and respect in life, but makes them social outcasts....Too many among us blame the hardness of the heathen, and call their belief in their own faith by very ugly names; but I think the utmost bound of charity needs to be extended to them when we think on -if we can at all estimate- the force of the reality of struggles like Seeta's. (p. 389)

The question, then, is whether this concept of the latent urges of Indians to embrace Christianity is Meadows Taylor's own viewpoint, or whether it is his concession to the social and religious climate of his time. As I've noted earlier, it seems fair to conclude, judging from Taylor's other works, that Seeta reflects the dominant opinions of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian society on the subject rather than Meadows Taylor's own thoughts. The Indian characters in Meadows Taylor's other novels do not experience the doubts which torment Seeta concerning religion. They do, however, admit to the superiority of the British and of British customs. Kasim Ali, for example, the Indian hero of Tippoo Sultaun, casts off Muslim tradition by contenting himself with one wife, Ameena, and wishing

that all my countrymen were so too; for I am well assured that to one alone can a man give all his love, and that where more than one is, there ensue those jealousies, envies, wild passions, evil, and sin which were well-nigh fatal to my Ameena.³⁶

This does not make Kasim any less dedicated to his faith or lessen his position in the community, but it demonstrates the positive influence in the novels of British thought on the Indians who come in contact with them.

Meadows Taylor, while anxious to establish the beneficent nature of British rule in India, is not blind to the shortcomings of his

contemporaries, the evidence of which we see in the many sharp statements against Anglo-Indian prejudice and narrow-mindedness. In Ralph Darnell and Seeta Meadows Taylor attempts to reflect the periods which they respectively cover, and this is how we should view their differing portrayals of interracial marriages. In both novels Meadows Taylor quite clearly is in favour of interracial marriages. He, however, is compromised by the period he writes about (as well as in), and the genre in which he chooses to express himself. Ralph Darnell, the weakest work of Taylor's Indian history trilogy, contains the most sympathetic and successful development of interracial relationships between British and Indian characters of all his works. It is because Ralph Darnell is set in the eighteenth century that Meadows Taylor can make the marriage between Ralph and Noor-ool-Nissah a happy one. The marriage in Seeta is doomed to fail because Meadows Taylor is constrained by popular opinion concerning interracial marriages in the nineteenth century, particularly ones that occur soon before the Indian Mutiny. If he had written about a successful interracial marriage in Seeta, it is certain that he would have been attacked for promoting something which was unrealistic or manifestly impossible to imagine occurring in the polite Anglo-Indian society of the period. Those critics who wrote unfavourably of Seeta when it first appeared concentrated on problems in the writing and the plot. They saw nothing wrong in, and in fact many applauded, Seeta's sad fate. Such a conclusion, in their minds, merely emphasized what they took for granted: interracial marriages were not a good thing anymore.

Notes

1. Philip Meadows Taylor, Seeta, 3d ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880, vii. (All further references to Seeta are noted in the text.)
2. Blackwood Papers, Ms. 4216, ff. 5-7.
3. Philip Meadows Taylor, Story of My Life, 2nd ed. 1878, 458.
4. Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, 212.
5. S.N. Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven, 2nd ed., Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1958, 39.
6. Bernard Porter, The Lion's Share: A Short History of Imperialism 1850-1970, London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1968, 29; Spear, The Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1975, 2nd ed., New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, 225. Stokes also makes this point in writing of the importance of traditional sources of leadership to the military mutineers. He notes, "The military system already provided a supra-caste and supra-communal organisation so that the mutineers looked at once for outside political leadership from traditional sources to enable them to act on the enlarged political scale necessary to meet the British counter-attack." "The Context of the 1857 Rebellion," in The Peasants and the Raj, 130.
7. George Dunbar, A History of India from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, 2nd ed., London: Nicholson & Watson, Ltd., 1939, 515; Spear, Oxford History of Modern India, 174-1975, 224.
8. Bernard Porter, The Lion's Share, 29.
9. Philip Woodruff (Philip Mason), The Men who Ruled India, vol. 1, London: Jonathan Cape, 1955, 357.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Philip Meadows Taylor, A Student's Manual of the History of India, 2nd ed. London: Longmans, Green & CO., 1871, 711]
13. Taylor, Story of My Life, 347.
14. Ibid.
15. E.H. Nolan, The Illustrated History of the British Empire in India and the East, London: James S. Virtue, (1862), vol. 8, 723.
16. Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven, 407.

17. Steven Attridge, "Echoes of Empire .3., -Disoriented Fictions (British Views of India as Reflected in Novels," Encounter 66.2 (1986): 65.
18. Brantlinger, 213.
19. B. J. Moore-Gilbert, Kipling and "Orientalism", London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, 78.
20. For a detailed analysis of the events concerning the uprising at Jhansi, see S.N Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven, 2nd ed., India: Government of India Press, 1958, 267-306.
21. Percival Spear, Oxford History of Modern India, 1740-1975, 298.
22. Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven, 11.
23. Porter, 35.
24. Brantlinger, 213.
25. Ibid., 216.
26. Taylor, Story of My Life, 327.
27. (Hilda Gregg), "The Indian Mutiny in Fiction," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 161, (Feb 1897): 222.
28. Moore-Gilbert, 52-53.
29. Bhupal Singh, A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, 49.
30. Calcutta Review, 63 (1873): 87.
31. Singh, op. cit., 49.
32. Udayon Misra, The Raj in fiction: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Attitudes towards India, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1987, 99.
33. Taylor, Story of My Life, 464.
34. Ibid.
35. Singh, op. cit., 49.
36. Philip Meadows Taylor, Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War, 2nd ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880, 454-455.

7. A NOBLE QUEEN: A ROMANCE OF INDIAN HISTORY

A Noble Queen: A Romance of Indian History was Taylor's last novel. It was written, during a period of ill health, in late 1874-75. It ran in serialised form in both The Week's News and The Overland Mail between February and December 1875, but was not published as a book until Kegan Paul & Co. brought it out in January 1878, following the success of Taylor's posthumously published autobiography, The Story of My Life. Taylor had been pondering the plot while working on his autobiography in early 1874. In the concluding section he notes: "After The Story of My Life is finished, I hope, if I am spared, to revert to the romantic and medieval period of Deccan history, and write an illustration of it, the plot of which is growing in my brain."¹

The period Taylor referred to was the late sixteenth-century, a particularly turbulent time in the history of the Deccan. Its history is marked by constant struggles for territory and control among the states which made up the Deccan region. The main historical figure of Taylor's work, Queen Chand Bibi, played a major role in the affairs of two of these states in the later sixteenth century. Five independent Muslim states existed in the Deccan at the start of the sixteenth century: Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golconda, Berar and Bidar. These five had sprung up from under the dominance of the Hindu ruled empire of Vijayanagar, whose influence over the Deccan ended when four of the states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golconda and Bidar, united to defeat the Vijayanagar army at the battle of Talikota in 1565.²

Chand Bibi played a part in forming the alliance (which proved to be a temporary one) between the two largest states Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. As daughter of Husain Nizam Shah, ruler of Ahmadnagar, she was given in marriage in 1564 to Ali Adil Shah, ruler of Bijapur, whose sister in turn was given in marriage to Husain's son Murtaza.³ Despite these matrimonial ties the alliance did not long survive the destruction of the Vijayanagar empire.

The rivalries between the Muslim states ensured that constant warfare would be the hallmark of late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century Deccan history. This resolved itself into a struggle between the three biggest Deccan states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda for dominance in the area, following the absorption of Berar and Bidar by their larger neighbours, Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, in 1574 and 1619 respectively.⁴ The struggle for dominance was further complicated by the attempted encroachments of the Mughal empire from the north.

Life in Bijapur, and later Ahmadnagar, proved turbulent for Chand Bibi. The period between 1580 and 1595 was marked by much disorder and political in-fighting in these states. In April 1580, for example, the ruler of Bijapur, Ali Adil Shah, was assassinated by a member of his court. His favourite nephew, Ibrahim Adil Shah II, then aged nine, ascended the throne under the guardianship of his aunt, Chand Bibi. The next four years were marked by clashes between the Queen and a succession of regents appointed to head the affairs of state. Relations between the Queen and her regents were continually strained by their attempts to usurp all authority within months of their accession. Due to the constant infighting, by 1584 Queen Chand

Bibi's influence and role in the Bijapurian state had been substantially reduced, and she subsequently retired to the Ahmadnagar court of her brother Murtaza Nizam Shah I, where she remained for the next fifteen years.⁵

Ahmadnagar proved no easier to live in, though. Between the death of Murtaza in 1588, and the invasion of the Mughals in 1595, there were four different rulers, all of whom were more involved in protecting their own interests than in developing programmes for the welfare of the state. The chaos of the period prompted the Mughal Emperor Akbar to make plans to subjugate the Ahmadnagar state, and in 1595 the opportunity arose for an invading force to be sent under the command of his son Murad.

At this point Chand Bibi declared herself regent and undertook the defence of Ahmadnagar against Murad's forces.⁶ She succeeded in uniting the population to face the Mughal threat, and Ahmadnagar's stiff resistance to Murad's siege proved so successful that, in the words of one commentator, "The Moghuls (sic) were compelled to accept terms quite unworthy of the imperial prestige."⁷ Nevertheless, the treaty signed in 1596 called for the Berar region, annexed two decades earlier by Ahmadnagar, to be ceded to Akbar, thus allowing the Mughal empire to retain a foothold in the Deccan region.

In the event, the demise of the Ahmadnagar empire was merely postponed, for in 1599, Akbar's troops invaded the region and once again besieged Ahmadnagar. Chand Bibi rose once more to the defence of the capital. This time, however, she was defeated by forces from within. In July 1600, after several months spent withstanding the siege, a group of Chand's officers and soldiers rose up and

assassinated her, for rumours spread that she was ready to cede the fort to the Mughals in exchange for safe passage out of the capital. The capital fell soon after to the Mughal forces and Ahmadnagar was annexed to the Akbar's empire.

Queen Chand Bibi was a figure who had long fascinated Taylor. Her defence of Ahmadnagar was the subject of popular legend, embodying her with the qualities Taylor was partial to using for his own fictional heroines. It is evident from various pieces he wrote in the early 1870s that he was aware of the possibilities of using Queen Chand Bibi as the subject of a historical romance. Writing of her demise in his 1871 work, A Student's Manual of Indian History, Taylor concludes with an homage to her courage and character which sounds as if straight out of one of his novels. "Beautiful in person, and at an early age a widow, there is yet no stain upon her honour," He notes, adding, "Her valour was unquestionable, and was put to the severest proof on many occasions; and her sad fate excited a feeling of universal commiseration, which has survived to the present time among her people." ⁸ In an article on Berar written contemporaneously with his work on A Noble Queen, Taylor notes briefly Chand's efforts against Akbar's forces in 1596, when, "After an heroic defence by the Queen Dowager, Chand Beebee (sic), she purchased peace by the cession of Berar, which thenceforward became an integral portion of the dominions of Dehly (sic)." ⁹

The manoeuvrings and intrigues that surrounded her life were the very stuff of the historical romances Taylor had written earlier in his literary career. Unfortunately Taylor failed to reproduce them credibly in A Noble Queen; it is generally agreed among its critics

to be his his weakest novel. The dialogue is poor and the descriptions of scenery, usually Taylor's strongest point, are on the whole extremely flat, with the exception of the descriptions of the Krishna falls. But in spite of its poor quality it remains of some interest because it marshals together, for a final time, many of the major themes present in Taylor's other works. The plot may be less well planned than that of such earlier works as Tara, but it nevertheless follows the pattern of most of Taylor's novels, interweaving fictional and historical characters and events .

A critic of the time notes that the work's chief faults are its discursiveness and its attempt "to weld together into coherence two distinct romances and the history of the Dekhan at the height of its glory," which "naturally and almost necessarily fails."¹⁰ Oddly, considering Taylor's interest in Queen Chand Bibi, the historical sections of the work deal only peripherally with her and concentrate more on the confusing alliances and battles between the Deccan states. The romantic elements of the novel are concentrated on the actions of two contrasting groups of characters, weakly tied in with the story of Chand Bibi. The two groups prove to be a blind fakir and his granddaughter, Zora; and a Portuguese priest, Francis D'Almeida, and his sister, Maria. These are compared and contrasted, and suffer similar trials and tribulations. Taylor employs the same plot pattern used in Tippoo Sultaun, moving alternately between the Indian and European protagonists who, like the similar protagonists of Tippoo Sultaun, follow paths that often intersect and intertwine.

The fakir, Syud Ahmud Ali, is in fact a disgraced Muslim nobleman and physician living in obscurity in the small fortress of Jaldrug

(now known as Shahdrug). Once a respected counsellor of the Bijapurian king Adil Shah I, he is ordered by the king in a fit of madness to be blinded and banished. Following much travail, he and his granddaughter Zora gain refuge in Jaldrug, where he languishes for many years praying and practicing medicine. Zora grows into a young adult well versed in Persian texts and Muslim prayers, much as Tara grows up with a knowledge of Hindu texts in Taylor's earlier work. Life, however, is disrupted when a young nobleman from Queen Chand's court, Abbas Khan, is brought to Jaldrug to recover from wounds received in a skirmish near the Bijapurian border. Zora and her father are brought in to attend his wounds, and no time is lost before Zora and Abbas develop mutual feelings of regard. However love is complicated by the fact that she is only a fakir's daughter, and thus of lower status than Abbas. To add to this complication, the governor of Jaldrug, one of the villains of the work, Abbas' cousin Osman Beg, also has his eye on her, and will stop at nothing to possess her. Before the end of the work Zora has escaped abduction by Osman Beg's henchmen no fewer than three times. Following the first escape Zora and her grandfather make their way, begging alms, through the Deccan area, eventually reaching Gulburgh. There Zora's grandfather becomes so imbued with religious fervor that his preachings are heard with amazement and awe. His fervor is such that soon he is acclaimed as a saint and returns from exile to Bijapur, where he is received with honour by the new king, who reinvests him with the land and possessions he lost in his initial flight from the capital. With his status thus elevated, he moves on to Ahmadnagar, where nothing stands in the way now for Zora and Abbas to be united in marriage, which is readily accomplished. Not content with the

conventional happy ending, though, Taylor tacks on several extra chapters insisting on an equally conventional sticky ending for the villain, in which Osman is met and vanquished for the last time in the final struggle for Ahmadnagar.

The Portuguese priest Francis D'Almeida and his sister Maria live out a similar fate. Persecution by Francis' superior, Dom Diego de Fonseca, a highly connected and fanatical Jesuit priest, leads them to flee their missionary settlement at Moodjul and take refuge at Jaldrug, where they are looked after by Zora and her grandfather. Maria faces the same trouble with Dom Diego as Zora does with Osman: both women must fight to maintain their purity and chastity. Taylor does not spend as much time detailing the travails of Francis and his sister as he does with Zora and her grandfather; the material is sufficiently conventional perhaps as even to persuade its author to avoid the tedium of repetition: but in the end antagonists and protagonists face each other in the struggle for Ahmadnagar, and Dom Diego, like Osman, meets the end appropriate to the villain of romance in the climactic battle.

As for Queen Chand, she stays on the periphery of the action, although her court is the eventual destination of all the major characters. In previous works, Taylor had made much use of the fictional characters to illuminate aspects of the historical figures. In A Noble Queen, though, this technique is unskillfully handled. The characters arrive and leave the Queen's court much as if it were an inn, staying only as long as the plot demands before conveniently disappearing for yet another commonplace adventure in yet another poorly sketched Indian country. Yet in the midst of this is Queen

Chand Bibi. Taylor's admiration for her is apparent, and she is described in heroic terms already familiar to readers of his earlier work. Her features are "regular and very beautiful; the eyes large, of a soft brown, with long dark eyelashes," and, like Seeta, Queen Chand Bibi has a European, Titian-like beauty:

Altogether the Queen's is one of those faces which, once seen, is never forgotten; and the complexion is fair, with a faint tinge of carnation through the cheeks, which makes it almost European. Could Titian but have painted the face, it would have been one of the most perfect and interesting in the world.¹¹

These qualities are idealised and described in cliché, making her "one who, among all the women of India, stands out as a jewel without flaw and beyond price." (p. 133) She can even bear close comparison with her English contemporary, Queen Elizabeth:

Few in England know that the contemporary of our Queen Elizabeth in the Dekhan kingdoms was a woman of equal ability, of equal political talent, of equal, though in a different sense, education and accomplishments, who ruled over a realm as large, a population as large, and as intelligent, and as rich as England. (p. 133)

Ultimately, she is "a woman who, surrounded by jealous enemies, preserved by her own personal valour and endurance her kingdom from destruction and partition; who, through all temptations and exercise of absolute power, was at once simple, generous, frank, and merciful as she was chaste, virtuous, religious and charitable." (p.133)

Chand Bibi's benevolence is matched by an equivalent spirit of generosity in D'Almeida and his sister. Taylor stresses their benevolent and "Christian" nature, (qualities the early Portuguese in Goa were not famed for), which prompts their Indian acquaintances to look up to them and seek their advice. As in Seeta, Taylor emphasises that contact with these benevolent Europeans invariably has a

regenerating effect on their Indian companions. Maria, for example, befriends Zora during her stay in Jaldrug, and her kind manner has the effect on the Indian girl of rekindling "the girl's dormant spirit, which before lay dead under an outer covering of ignorance and neglect, and might never have been moved but for the Senora's gentle teachings." (p. 81) This would seem at odds with Zora's privileged position as the fakir's granddaughter, which provides her with opportunities of learning not open to most Indian women of her time. Taylor, however, takes pains to stress that without Maria's help Zora's mental world would have remained very restricted:

The natural intelligence of the child would have died out under the ordinary life of a Mussulman woman of the lower orders, a station which she at best could hope to fill. The intercourse with Maria, short as it had been, had opened to Zora an apparently unbounded vista of the world without, and of knowledge which she burned to attain. (p. 81)

The implications of this passage are made clearer when Maria and her brother leave Jaldrug. Zora is left to lament the loss of her mentor, who in a short month has changed her life, for "the communion with Maria's sweet pure spirit had raised the girl's ductile mind from many imperfections, which were the result of neglect and uncontrol, and till the day of parting she was inconsolable." (p. 77) The point is clear: Maria, the European, is obviously superior in wisdom and purer in vision, and thus association with her can only serve to improve Zora's life. This is really a one way exchange, for Maria is not seen to benefit from Zora's company very much, except in so far as it provides an opportunity for her to practice her teaching skills.

Yet what exactly is it that Maria teaches Zora that she should treasure so much after Maria leaves? In reality it amounts to very

little: all Maria seems to have done is left behind a memory of her kindness, some scraps of "holy counsel", and a sheaf of hymns for Zora to sing. Zora's behaviour after Maria departs seems ineptly cosy: "Day after day she sang the little hymns and songs she had learned. She talked to her sick folk of the kind Christian lady, of her gentle, soothing presence, and her wise words." (p. 81) And in the end Zora returns to her old concerns: looking after her grandfather, reading her Persian books, which for Meadows Taylor clearly lack the quality of the "the little hymns and songs", and doing something more useful for the sick and injured than talking about the "kind Christian lady".

As far as Francis is concerned, his skills in medicine are certainly prized, as are his diplomatic skills, which reach their heights at Queen Chand's court, where he is taken after his stay at Jaldrug. There he cures Queen Chand's daughter of an enervating condition somewhat like consumption, and through skillful translation of several Portuguese documents issued by the devious Dom Diego he uncovers a plot against the Ahmadnagar state, both actions earning him the gratitude of the Queen. Much is made of his benevolence and piety, but Francis's character is not developed beyond the conventionally pious.

The fakir is equally benevolent and pious, but is given greater individuality. Taylor draws some parallels between him and Francis, echoing the similar, though more substantial, treatment of the protagonists in his earlier work Tippoo Sultaun. As in Tippoo Sultaun, Taylor finds much to commend in the Muslim religion, particularly where its precepts most resemble Christian thought, and

while he makes many references to the superstitions of the Indian people, Muslim and Hindu, he makes an effort to stress in particular the better side of Muslim practice. The fakir preaches sermons calling for adherence to commonplace pious precepts familiar to the audience of a Christian sermon :

He spoke of the softer graces of habitual piety, of truth to man and to God, and of sobriety, patience and endurance; tenderness in home duties and abroad; in short, attention to all the godly precepts of the book of God's messenger, who had inspired it, as he believed, and enjoined constant thought of the day of judgment, and the trial then of all profession. (p. 304)

Taylor pointedly qualifies this section, however, with a plea to the reader to believe that the Koran actually contains such a message. "Be not offended with me, O Christian reader," he writes, "for such things can be taught out of the book you have been told to hold in scorn, apart from the mystery and sensual doctrines which are so strangely mingled with them." (p. 304)

Taylor's liking for Muslim characters manifests itself more strongly in the presentation of Abbas Khan, who is cast in the mould of the ideal romance hero, and contrasted with his villainous cousin Osman Beg. They represent what one reviewer suggests as "very opposite types of that formidable Moslim (sic) chivalry which, till it came in collision with disciplined Europeans, carried all before it from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin."¹² At the beginning of the work both seem equally good intentioned and chivalric. But as the plot develops and the need for a suitable Indian antagonist increases, Osman changes into the stock villain present in many of Taylor's other works. He becomes, in the words of the Edinburgh Review critic, "the representative Oriental warrior, as Europeans are in the habit

of conceiving him -and, as we are bound to say, not without plausible presumption- spoiled in the zenana, brought up in self-indulgence, as lustful of money and power as of battle and carnage."¹³

But, potentially at least, there is more to Taylor's figures than this. Abbas Khan is his representative "Oriental" warrior, an ideal figure recalling the more fully delineated Indian heroes of Tippoo Sultaun and Tara, whose fighting qualities, allied with a tolerant nature and a strong faith in Islam, all served to help rescue and win the love of respective Indian heroines. Abbas Khan, though, is even more of a cutout character, adding a romantic touch to the proceedings and providing a routine hero to do battle for Zora. He is a slighter reflection of the stock heroes of Taylor's earlier work.

Osman is also a lesser version of characters present in earlier works, cast in the same mould as Moro Trimmul in Tara and Azrael Pande in Seeta. Osman, like Moro and Azrael, lusts after the Indian heroine of the work to the extent of letting his passion override all concerns and dictate all his actions. Osman, however, at least starts off in a gentlemanly frame of mind by contemplating making her his wife. But any possible complexity of motive remains unexplored. Zora's antipathy towards him produces a stereotyped villainous response, and he resorts to kidnapping to achieve his ends. His orders for her capture offer evidence that his passion is beginning to get out of control -he lacks European "discipline". Warned that his scheme is dangerous by a fellow conspirator, he explodes angrily, in the kind of non-English English the author uses to express the exotic nature of Indian expression:

Peace with thy jargon, O fool! Am I not burned already by her? Doth she not consume me night and day? By Alla, I

believe she is a witch, and the old man a sorcerer, and they have been plotting their hellish magic against me. (p. 87)

The language, in this case, recalls the similarly melodramatic exclamations of Azrael Pande over the eponymous heroine in Seeta. Osman's plot fails, as do the subsequent vengeful attacks, and in the end he seeks to exact a final vengeance by insinuating himself into the command of a group of Akbar's invading forces of 1599. Taylor conveniently brings together all the characters (even Dom Diego, the Portuguese villain takes part in this siege!), for the final, climactic battle at Ahmadnagar. And Osman's motive for aiding the Mughals is predictable, given his role in the work: knowledge that Zora is at Ahmadnagar goads him on, for in "all these intervening years the mad craving of his heart for Zora had never diminished, nay, it had fed on its own imaginings." (p. 463) Here again, Taylor hints at complexities and potentials in Osman that are never explained. Both Dom Diego and Osman Beg meet their justly deserved deaths on the slopes of Ahmadnagar, and Queen Chand's death closes the work.

The characterisations and plotting in A Noble Queen exhibit clearly Taylor's literary exhaustion at this late stage in his life. The work has little of the sharp detail seen in such earlier works as Tara or Confessions of a Thug. There are some exceptions to this, as I said above, the most interesting being the descriptions of the waterfalls located near the Jaldrug fort.

The falls, part of the course of the Krishna river, had made a strong impression on Taylor when he first saw them. "I had never seen such a sight during my life, and perhaps few cataracts in the world

can surpass it, when in flood, for sublimity and beauty," he notes in his autobiography.¹⁴ One can sense its impact in the description of his visit to the falls in 1859. "The fall itself," he begins

is not perpendicular, but becomes a roaring cataract half a mile broad when the river is in flood. The scene then is indescribably grand, an enormous broken volume of water rushing down an incline of granite with a roar that can be easily heard at a distance of thirty miles, and a cloud of spray dashing up high into the air; while the irregularity of the incline, its huge rocks, and the deep holes which the waters have excavated, increase the wonderful effect of the cataract, and brilliant rainbows flash through the spray, changing with every breath of wind. Finally, the waters fall into a deep pool, which becomes a whirling mass covered with billows that, rushing in every direction, clash and break against each other, sending up great piles of foam.¹⁵

He ends the paragraph by quoting a "Beydur" travelling with him, who remarks of the fall: "It is like all the white horses in the world fighting together, and tossing their manes into the air."¹⁶ It is a simile used again in A Noble Queen, when one of the characters exclaims of the falls, "See, it is like all the horses in the world tossing their manes and fighting." (p. 10)

The descriptions of the falls in A Noble Queen dramatically extend the points made in the autobiography, and are turned to symbolic use. Taylor first gives the cataracts and the river a feminine identity, then links them to Zora by drawing our attention to them during crucial events which specifically or indirectly affect her. At the beginning of the work, for example, a dramatic rise in the water level flowing through the Krishna river, and over the cataracts, heralds as well as threatens the arrival of the injured Abbas Khan, later to become Zora's husband. The river is given a specifically feminine nature, with characters urging Abbas' men not to make the crossing to Jaldrug for fear of the "Mother". "Do ye not know,

master, that Mother Krishna is running full, and ye cannot get refuge in the fort?" says one character, who later adds, "The mother river is raging,...do not ye hear her? and, indeed, the thunder of the cataract has increased as the wind fell. No one could attempt to cross the rapids below and live." (p. 6; p. 8) When Abbas finally sights the falls, emphasis is laid particularly on its enormous power. This power, however, is described as a feminine one: "You would like, perhaps, to see the nymph in her fury," suggests one of Abbas' retainers. (p. 9) What Abbas sees almost overpowers him with its turbulence:

It was, indeed, a frightful place to look upon. At his feet, as it seemed, in a wide pool at the foot of the fall, the tremendous masses of water falling into it met other currents and eddies of equal power, and dashing together raised enormous waves which met in innumerable shocks, and cast their spray high into the air, whirling, foaming, breaking with inconceivable violence and grandeur almost impossible to look on with a steady eye for a moment together." (p. 10)

Yet this violence is not without its moments of beauty, and Taylor recalls the image of rainbow colours playing over the surface of the falls which he used in his autobiography:

The sun had become low in the heavens, and the slanting beams of light played over the boiling water with exquisite effect. The terror of the cataract had passed away, and only its beauty remained. Although the water was yellow and muddy, yet the rosy light played among every giant stream, or tiny portion of the vast fall, causing rainbows to appear, to vanish, and to re-appear in every part of the spray on which the sun shone. No one could count them; some remained steady for an instant, then broke to pieces; some were seen only to disappear; while beneath them the stupendous rushes of water from the great holes, rising in perpetual changes, seemed hung with these lovely garlands ever varying. (p. 11)

Having established the female nature of the cataract, Taylor, perhaps unconsciously, develops the symbiotic relationship between

the falls and Zora's sexual and emotional states. It is significant that the cataract is used either as a descriptive reflection of Zora's emotional state, or as a setting involving sexual threat to her.

The former point is evident during Abbas' recuperation under Zora's care. Her attraction to him is developed during this period, and her patient vigil during his fevered first night at Jaldrug provides much opportunity for admiring his heroic form, as Taylor notes:

Before her lay a youth whose form was cast in a noble fashion. His muscular arms were bare, and his broad chest, except where it was bound up. When the features were at rest, they seemed to her grand and beautiful; and when he sometimes smiled during his snatches of sleep, a winning frank expression passed over them, and the gentlest smile she had ever seen. (p. 17-18)

This vigil provokes much emotional tension in Zora, a tension which is echoed in the cataract and river flow. At one point Abbas moans in pain and Zora turns away "with tears and low sobs, which she could only with difficulty stifle." (p. 18) At the same time the cataract, which had hitherto been flowing at a constant rate, begins changing its pattern, as if to match Zora's emotional state: "And still she watched...and the cataract continued its monotonous, thundering roar, which seemed at times to fall into a sobbing moan." (ibid) The next morning, with Abbas' fever broken, Zora falls into a relieved sleep, and as if in response the river flows placidly into the "large, quiet, lake-like pool," with the cataract above similarly muted, now only roaring "with a sullen moan." (p. 22)

The vigil, and Abbas' fevered state during it, leaves Abbas' with a confused impression intertwining the turbulence of the flood with

Zora. This is made explicit in a later scene centred again around the falls, where Abbas encounters Zora after another flood has raised the cataract level. He tells her:

It was such a flood as this when I was brought across this torrent, wounded and sick almost to death...Hast thou forgotten it? It was thy face then that I saw as an angel's, who gave me cool sherbert of Persia.... I have no remembrance save of thee, Zora...only an angel seemed to visit me, and soothe me." (p. 66-67)

The impression is of danger abated through the intercession and comforting of Zora.

Taylor, however, suggests more unconventional tendencies in Zora when Maria D'Almeida and her brother arrive at Jaldrug. Zora immediately takes to Maria, and her greetings and appraisal of Maria are perhaps even more passionate than those accorded earlier to Abbas. Yet they are similar to Abbas own expressions regarding Zora, as when Zora greets Maria for the first time. "O gentle lady," exclaims Zora on seeing Maria, "surely thou art as beautiful as an angel." (p. 56) Maria's beauty provokes a rather startlingly strong physical response in Zora as well: "Her large, liquid eyes were dilated to the full; her lips open, showing her white glistening teeth; and her first look of amazement had expanded into a beaming smile as she stretched forth her arms to embrace her guest." (p. 56) The dilated eyes and open mouth are not a standard part of Taylor's female descriptions, indicating that something unusual is surely occurring here.

Zora's physical attraction to Maria is given fuller treatment that evening, when a heavy storm lashes the Jaldrug fort. The D'Almeidas, much like Abbas, seem to have a profound effect on nature! The storm

is quite fearful, and soon after its onset Zora comes running in to Maria's room seeking protection. Zora ends up sharing Maria's bed for the night, and although the intention on Taylor's part may have been to illustrate Maria's gentle "Christian" nature, and Zora's childlike innocence, the passage is strongly suggestive of alternative sexual meanings:

After a little while Maria rose, combed out her silky hair, divested herself of her upper garments, and after her usual ablution, kissed the child, and lay down beside her; and though the thunder still roared and the lightning flashed, sleep came to them as they lay locked in each other's arms; thus they rested peacefully, while the thunder clouds passed away down the river to the east, dispensing their cooling and fertilising influences far and wide, and the stars shone out with a dewy brilliance over the fort, the river, and the ever-moaning cataract. (p. 59)

Note the presence of the "ever-moaning" cataract, even in this peaceful moment.

Even more significantly, Zora's awakening the next morning is described in a conventionally romantic language more appropriate to Victorian love scenes. "Zora raised herself on her arm," Taylor notes, "and looked with earnest eyes on her companion. 'How beautiful thou art, Maria,' she said, as she smoothed the soft hair from her brow, 'and how fair, and thy cheek like a pale Oleander flower.'" (p. 59) This seems a far cry from the purity of "Christian" spirit Maria supposedly embodies. It also calls into question what exactly is meant in emphasising this aspect of her relationship with Zora. Most likely it is an exaggerated example of the typical sentimentality of many Victorian romances of the period. In developing the relationship between Maria and Zora, what better way to emphasise the purity of their friendship than by showing the extremely sisterly manner in which they regard each other? Whatever the case may be,

Maria's departure is still difficult for Zora to bear. And once again, the link between the river and Zora is referred to. Zora spends many sad hours mourning the departure of Maria by the cataract, and we read how "the girl's tears fell fast and often as she sat alone, while the great river seemed to moan and sob in sympathy." (p. 92)

The river and cataract are also prominent in scenes involving sexual threat to Zora. These scenes revolve around the appearance of Osman Beg, the novel's appointed Indian villain. In fact, the cataract is a place of both love and hate for Osman. Initially, he confesses to Abbas Khan that he cannot bear the cataract, "which for three months in every year seems to clamour at me like a devil; mingles with my dreams if I am asleep, and carried by the wind when it is in flood, the noise and spray even enter here, and I am deafened and drenched." (p. 49) Yet the cataract is also the only place where he can spot Zora, who eventually becomes the overriding passion of his life. One such encounter, involving the shooting of a panther near the waterfall, provokes an unequivocal reaction from Zora. She clings to Maria, telling her, "I do not like him...he always looks at me when I chance to meet him, and his eyes are evil." (p. 66) The encounter proves fateful: following the meeting, Osman decides to have Zora kidnapped and made his wife. Significantly, the kidnapping takes place as Zora visits the waterfall shortly after Maria's departure. And likewise her escape is made across the river under cover of darkness and the roar of the cataract.

It should be noted, finally, that these passages concerning the cataract and the river all point to an important aspect of Zora's

character not fully developed elsewhere in the work. Zora is seen in this context as quite passionate and emotional. And in linking her with the river and cataract, Taylor keeps returning to images of irresistibility and forcefulness. The cataract's sound pervades throughout the fort. It is "ever-moaning" (p. 59), or falling "with a terrible foam and clamour," (p. 61) and in times of flood, dashing "down the rocks with irresistible fury and velocity, foaming, sending up clouds of spray, and roaring with a sound deeper than thunder." (p. 64) The river is also portrayed in similar tone. By tying the powerful symbolism of the cataract and the river to Zora, Taylor hints at a development in Zora's character in line with the characteristics of the female heroines in his earlier works.

There are not many other fully realised descriptions of Indian scenery present in A Noble Queen. A few passages, however, do display similar intensities of emotion. One such passage, describing the dawn over the Krishna river, resembles a similar presentation in Tippoo Sultaun of the dawn sky over Bombay, discussed in an earlier chapter:

The sun had not risen, and the east was full of orange, purple, and crimson clouds rising almost to the zenith, with a pale green streak of clear sky near the horizon. To the north and south the sky was flecked with fleecy cloudlets, which caught, now golden, now crimson, now orange and pink rays, growing fainter and fainter as they receded; but the glory of all was in the centre, which glowed like molten metal, and was reflected in the large pool where the two streams met below. (p. 48)

This passage, like that in Tippoo Sultaun, demonstrates Taylor's eye for colour. As discussed in earlier chapters, Taylor's view of India works best in descriptions like these, which reveal his "artist's eye". His interest in painting and sketching India carry over as verbal sketches in his work. Here, bright colours dominate the

description. Similarly a sunrise over the Bijapur plain, described later in the text, brings strong colours to play over the horizon. "The eastern plain seemed filled with a rosy, golden light, and the distinctness of objects was blurred by it; but nearer, every object in the city and plain assumed a new beauty; the sombre mass of the great mausoleum shone with a roseate glow, its gilded spire flashing in the sun." (p. 117) One senses the intensity of light which would bring about such conditions.

Such images, however, are few and far between in A Noble Queen, and consequently the work's significance must lie in its presentation of plotting devices and characterisations common to almost all of Taylor's previous works. It is unfortunate, though, that Taylor's last romance work, as Henry Bruce remarks in his annotation of Taylor's autobiography, should only leave "a mere blur in the mind after the most conscientious readings."¹⁷

Notes

1. Philip Meadows Taylor, Story of My Life, 2nd ed., Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1878, 461.
2. R.C. Majumdar, et. al., ed., The History and Culture of the Indian People: vol. 7: The Mughul Empire, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1974, 414.
3. Ibid., 424; H.K. Sherwani & P.M. Joshi, eds., The History of Medieval Deccan, Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Govt. Text-book Press, 1973, vol. I, 330.
4. Majumdar et. al., op. cit., 413.
5. Sherwani et. al., op. cit., 340; Philip Meadows Taylor, A Student's Manual of Indian History, 2nd ed., London: Longman, Green & Co., 1871, 303.
6. Majumdar et. al., 432.
7. Laurence Binyon, Akbar, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1942, 138.
8. Taylor, A Student's Manual of Indian History, 315-316.
9. Philip Meadows Taylor, "Administration of Berar," Edinburgh Review, Jan 1873: 230.
10. Pall Mall Gazette, 27.4104 (April 16, 1878): 12.
11. Philip Meadows Taylor, A Noble Queen: An Indian Romance, new ed., London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1892, 128-129. (All further references to the work noted in brackets in the text.)
12. Taylor, "Administration of Berar," 482.
13. Ibid.
14. Taylor, Story of My Life, 420.
15. Ibid., 419-420.
16. Ibid.
17. Henry Bruce, ed. Story of My Life, Oxford: OUP, 1920, xxix.

8. CONCLUSION: LANDSCAPE, DOMESTICITY AND "ORIENTALISM"

A special aspect of Taylor's works, as already noted in earlier sections of this thesis, is his portrayal of landscape. Taylor's ability to present vivid and realistic portraits of India and of Indian landscape is what most distinguishes his works from the vague generalities of his predecessors, like Southey and Walter Scott. It points the way to the works of such celebrated successors as Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster. In discussing British literary views on India, two points will be focused on which best exhibit how Taylor's views both differ from and conform to representations of India in earlier and later writings. These are: firstly, the physical representations of India as seen in British imaginative writing before and after Taylor; and secondly, the underlying perceptions of India revealed by these representations.

The granting by Queen Elizabeth to the English East India Company in 1600 of a charter to explore and trade in India presaged an era when only a little became known of India, but much was deduced from the evidence of exotic spices, cloths, and precious stones. The influx of such trading goods reinforced the British perception of India as a land of exotic mystery and wealth, a perception also found in European romances of the Middle Ages. Such romances as the fifteenth-century Italian romance Orlando Innamorato, or Lodovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso (1532), presented the Orient not only as mysterious, magical and opulent, but more often than not also added

descriptions of India "as a land peopled by Amazons, monsters and devils, as well as by wise and ascetic brahmins. "1

Images of India present in Elizabethan works of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, just prior to the development of direct trade with India, suggest primarily the wealth which was believed to be found there. In Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1587), for example, we find

Men from the farthest equinoctial line
Have swarmed in troops into the Eastern India,
Lading their ships with gold and precious stones,
And made their sports from all our provinces.²

Other works by Marlowe contain similar references to Indian treasures. There is excitement about the rich prospects of India in Dr. Faustus (1604), for example, where Marlowe writes,

I'll have them fly to India for gold
Ransack the ocean for Orient pearl.³

Indian treasures also feature briefly in The Tragedy of Dido (1594), where Dido tells Aeneas,

And thou, Aeneas, Dido's treasury,
In whose fair bosom I will lock more wealth
Than twenty thousand Indias can afford.⁴

These scattered references to India in Marlowe's work typify the Elizabethan imaginative representation of the subcontinent. Little is said of the landscape because little is known. As English activity in India increases throughout the seventeenth century and reports of such travellers as Thomas Roe filter back, however, writers begin to view India more specifically, but not necessarily more accurately. India becomes the setting for the occasional play, however vaguely represented, as for example John Dryden's Aureng-zebe, produced in 1675. In this and other British works of the time, India is still

veiled in opulence and romance, but more emphasis is placed on India's trading goods, goods such as spices, wines, gold and diamonds. John Donne, for example, in "The Sun Rising" (1633) uses India's spices metaphorically in indicating his possession of wealth and power in the shape of his mistress. He urges the sun, which has disturbed the lovers' on its rising,

Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.⁵

Similarly, In Annus Mirabilis (1666), John Dryden speaks of the Dutch reaping profits in the jewels and spice trade in the Indies,

For them alone the heavens had kindly heat,
In eastern quarries ripening precious dew;
For them the Idumaeen balm did sweat,
And in hot Ceylon spicy forests grew.⁶

At the end of the work he lauds Britain for having won control of the trading routes to these faraway lands, and joyfully notes,

Thus to the Eastern wealth through storms we go;
But now, the Cape once doubled, fear no more:
A constant trade-wind will securely blow,⁷
And gently lay us on the spicy shore.

Spices and other trade goods mark the landscape of the seventeenth-century Oriental tale. The first half of the eighteenth century sees little change in this depiction, although the publication of Antoine Galland's translation of the Tales of the Thousand and One Nights (1704-1717), a collection of tales derived from Indian, Persian and Arabic sources, does spark a fad for similar "Orientalised" tales in European literature.⁸ These tales, as Donald Lach and Theodore Foss point out, merely "preserved an undifferentiated Asia peopled with stock characters: genii, magician,

captive maidens in seraglios, magnificent mandarins and autocratic sultans in settings of fabulous wealth."⁹ As a result, "when the eighteenth-century European reader picked up a volume of Oriental tales he expected to be transported to a place of fantasy, a fairyland of stock exotica, where characters use elusive and quaintly overblown rhetoric and employ magic and enchantment liberally."¹⁰ This is still very much the case in Britain a century later, when the Romantics begin using "Oriental" imagery in their writings. By then, though, new information on Eastern culture has been absorbed and added to the older images of precious spices and Eastern exotica.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the effect of "Orientalist" research and translations of classic Indian texts. William Jones published his translation of the Indian classical play Sakuntala in 1789, and Charles Wilkins, in 1785, became the first to translate the Bhagavad Gita into English. They helped fuel the phase of "Orientalist" literature which marked the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. The Romantics, authors such as Shelley, Coleridge, Southey, and Thomas Moore, were to draw inspiration from these translations, and to create images in their works based on classic Indian mythology. Their texts also drew from the Eastern imageries of The Tales of the Thousand and One Nights. Thus Moore's Lalla Rookh (1817), for example, draws on The Tales of the Thousand and One Nights for its literary framework (a narrator telling stories on succeeding evenings), and on its Eastern images (the presentation of Houris and Peris, nymphs of Paradise, often recurring in the tales). Likewise Southey's Curse of Kehama (1810), and Samuel Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1798) draw inspiration from a variety of

Eastern-oriented travel works such as Samuel Purchas' Purchas His Pilgrimage (1613) and Purchas His Pilgrimes (1625), as well as the French physician Francois Bernier's A Collection of Voyages and Travels (first published in English in 1671-72).¹¹

The Romantics' penchant for exotic themes in their works reflected in part their reaction against the classicism of eighteenth-century literature. Works of the Augustan age, as J.J. Saunders notes, possessed "certain unmistakable characteristics, such as a hatred for mystery and enthusiasm, the repression of emotion and imagination, obedience to supposedly Aristotelian rules...and a passion for clearness and regularity."¹² The Augustans also focused on urban life, and were absorbed by "the social man, with the desire to better society."¹³ In revolting against these views, the Romantics emphasised emotionalism and imagination. They also turned away from the urban world of the Classicists, idealising and seeking inspiration from nature and the wild and untamed outdoors. They "turned men's attentions from the cities, the artificial creation of human hands, to the countryside, where the handiwork of the Creator luxuriated in its natural loveliness."¹⁴

For the Romantics, peace and harmony was not only to be found in nature but also in the simpler, more idealised "primitive" society. The idealisation of the "noble savage" and his way of life, derived from Rousseau's philosophical works on the subject, accorded with the Romantics' view that man's happiness and well being decreased in direct proportion to his degree of civilisation.¹⁵ Thus the exotic, remote and presumed simpler world of the "Orient" presented ideal subject matters for the Romantic imagination.

But despite the Romantics' use of "authentic" sources such as travel works and Oriental fairy tales for inspiration, their "Orientalised" works are set in romantic Indian landscapes that, like the landscapes of their literary predecessors, still bear little resemblance to the reality of India. For while the sources of the Romantics may have been more defined than those of the Augustans and Elizabethans, their eventual creations lack authenticity. India is still a land described best by known trading commodities. The trees which provide soothing shade to weary travellers in Southey and Moore's works are mostly fruit or spice trees of different varieties. Southey favours the coco~~n~~ut tree, as in

Reclined beneath a Cocoa's feathery
shade
Ladurlad lies,¹⁶

or

Yon rows of rice erect and silent stand,
The shadow of the Cocoa's lightest
plume
Is steady on the sand.¹⁷

The coco~~n~~ut trees form part of an Indian paradise, fragrant and -rather vaguely- beautiful, which also contains peacocks, lotus flowers, and blooming bowers,

Where every amaranthine flower
Its deathless blossom interweaves
With bright and undecaying leaves.¹⁸

Southey's principal concern in The Curse of Kehama, of course, is not with Indian landscape but rather with the struggle between good, exemplified in the character Ladurlad, and evil, represented by the villainous Kehama.¹⁹

Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh, however, has more to say regarding Indian scenery. His landscape does not contain cocoa trees but it does have mango, tamarind and banyan trees, which are found in a series of Kashmirian gardens visited by a princess on her way to be married. She and her entourage travel from garden to garden, and are entertained at each stop with a series of tales by a poet, who proves in the end to be her intended husband in disguise. Moore's Indian landscape is tinged with romance, in accordance with the overall tone of the work, a tale essentially of the wooing of the heroine by the hero. The overall effect is to create an intriguing Eastern setting, vague but more authoritative in its descriptions. A prime example of this is the description of Lalla Rookh's homeleaving:

The day of Lalla Rookh's departure from Delhi was as splendid as sunshine and pageantry could make it. The bazaars and baths were all covered with the richest tapestry; hundreds of gilded barges upon the Jumna floated with their banners shining in the water; while through the streets groups of beautiful children went strewing the most delicious flowers around, as in that Persian festival called the Scattering of the Roses; till every part of the city was as fragrant as if a caravan of musk from Khoten had passed through it.²⁰

An attempt is made to give authenticity by means of general "Eastern" images of bazaars and caravans, and more specifically, barges on the Jumna. Its generalisation allows it to accommodate Persian festivals to add to the mystique of the moment. But in reality the images are only commonplace, and conform to the larger Romantic conception of what the East should be like. It is a place of splendid sunshine, of beautiful children scattering flowers, of "gilded barges" and a "caravan of musk".

Moore's Indian gardens are similarly idyllic. Each successive garden is similar to the last, and little is said of the scenery

through which the princess's entourage must travel to reach these spots. Naturally these pleasure spots, filled as they are with the common stock of fruit trees and fragrant blossoms, prove conducive to rest and romance, an "Orientalisation" of the older European image of the garden of love, perhaps. A typical example is Moore's description of a garden encamped in near Lahore, containing a grove, "full of small Hindoo temples, and planted with the most graceful trees of the East; where the tamarind, the cassia, and the silken plantains of Ceylon were mingled in rich contrast with the high fan-like foliage of the Palmyra, -that favourite tree of the luxurious bird that lights up the chambers of its nest with fire-flies."²¹ The site also contains a tank filled with red lotus leaves and surrounded by mango trees. Again, we see how Moore creates a vaguely Eastern stereotype masquerading as an Indian landscape. Hindu temples and Indian vegetation serve as background to the landscape, but they are not described in detail, and peculiar fauna add an extra note of Eastern mystery to the scene. All this brings us no nearer to India, no closer to presenting an accurate view of India than Moore's Augustan and Elizabethan predecessors. His work, though, illustrates a "pre-colonial" perception of India. India is still a far off, romantic place, still relatively unknown in the popular imagination, but fashionable in terms of reactions against the English urban and rural worlds of Augustan literature. A decade after Lalla Rookh is published, this view has undergone some modification, although the old "exotica" still continues to make a regular appearance in popular literature.

Much emphasis has been laid by historians on the importance of Robert Clive's 1757 victory at the Battle of Plassey in changing the nature of British involvement in India. This event supposedly marked the official end to the purely mercantile relations between Britain and India, and the beginning of Britain's active political involvement in Indian affairs. It is not until the eighteen-twenties, however, that we see any such change reflected in British literature. As Bhupal Singh notes, it is now "that England began to see something of real India [in literature], and the foundations of Anglo-Indian fiction were laid."²² But initially the change was slight.

India remained a place of romance, but this romance was now the romance of adventure, of British pioneers confidently dominating and searching the Indian landscape for treasures and the good fight. This is seen in particular in Walter Scott's The Surgeon's Daughter, published in 1827. As already discussed in an earlier chapter, Scott knew as little of India as did his predecessors Moore and Southey. His vague descriptions of Indian landscape, however, are gleaned from historical accounts and the personal recollections of friends. Although the vague generalities can sound similar to those in Moore's works, they are used for a different purpose, in this case to provide a backdrop for heroic British action.

That successful literary treatments of India of this period invariably concentrate on British achievements and exploits is an important point to note, in particular because India and its landscape become increasingly defined solely in the context of British action. As one commentator notes, British authors "generally came to see India in the light of their direct or indirect

involvement in the administration of the country."²³ This contact between the British and India, and the change from a purely mercantile to a strongly administrative relationship, introduced a feeling of alienation among many who came out to India. There was little of "home" to cushion the shock of encountering a new environment, and all too often romantic preconceptions of what India looked like corresponded little with the harsh reality. Notes one critic,

In addition to the rigours of the Indian climate, the landscape itself often appeared impoverished and dreary. The conventionally romantic view of India as the Taj Mahal, Darjeeling, Simla, or in the valleys of Kashmir bore no resemblance to the physical landscape in which many English people passed their lives; or the drabness they endured.²⁴

This may partially account for a general lack of inspiring Indian landscape in many mid-nineteenth century works on India.

One example of this genre is Oakfield, W.D. Arnold's fictional investigation into the world of Anglo-Indians, published in 1853. Arnold more often than not presents vague views of Indian landscape rather like those of Scott. In spite of its autobiographical basis (much of the work was based on William's own experiences in the Indian subcontinent), the novel, as one critic has aptly put it, "is hardly more than accidentally an Anglo-Indian novel. It might have had another geographical location, its hero another means of livelihood, without significant alteration of its meaning."²⁵ Arnold's preoccupation is with his British protagonist's conflict with personal and societal values, with India serving only as a convenient backdrop for the playing out of this conflict. The following is a typical example of the indistinct, but unsuggestive landscape found in the work:

The pale blue sky was clear and cloudless above him. Below lay the plains stretching as far as the horizon, one dank hot fogbank; the heavy boiling wind was exchanged for light fresh breezes, exhilarating almost to intoxication; the rays of the rising sun were welcomed for their now pleasing warmth; the hills were one mass of fresh moist verdure.²⁶

This is not to say that the work does not succeed on other levels. What it demonstrates, though, is the type of presentation of India current in Taylor's time, a presentation from which Taylor sought to break away, particularly in his later works.

One such presentation, to which little attention has been paid, is Taylor's peculiarly Victorian views of domesticity in the Indian home. As has been noted earlier, one of Taylor's main concerns was to educate British readers on India and its people, a concern seen particularly in his works after 1860. While this didactic position entailed a certain stressing of the different nature of Indians and their customs, there is also an effort on Taylor's part to emphasise the similarities between British and Indian behaviour and values. Taylor's efforts were in part due to his desire to address the widening gulf he saw developing between British administrators in India and their Indian subjects, a gulf which echoed similar social and class developments in Britain.

One particularly interesting point is how akin Taylor's comments on India, Indians and Anglo-Indians were to contemporary discussions of the class problem in Britain. In literature produced during the latter half of the nineteenth century on the plight of the British lower classes, there is an alarmed perception of the widening gap between the various social classes. "Of all the social problems faced by the Victorians," one recent critic has noted, "this perception,

that society was becoming rapidly divided into classes of people separate from and hostile to each other, was felt to be the most fundamental."²⁷ This view was seen in particular in works by such social reformers as Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth (founder of the Salvation Army), and authors such as Charles Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell.

In their efforts to bring this problem to the attention of the middle and upper classes, many of these writers and "social explorers", who ventured into the underworld of British cities to study this relatively unknown side of British society, stressed the alien nature of what might have been to many a familiar sight. As one recent analyst has written, "Their reports read like despatches from a distant and barbarous land, where the likes of trotterscraping were routine occupations."²⁸

It was a paradox in which the foreign was aligned with the familiar in order to gain the understanding and attention of the reader. This aspect of reports of the underprivileged was important for the social reformer who wanted, as one commentator notes, "to inspire others to follow his example and therefore needs to stress the accessibility of these dark and forbidding places, but if he makes the journey seem too easy then no real challenge is offered and his main purpose is defeated."²⁹

This paradox, whereby a supposedly inaccessible and foreign world is defined for the reader in familiar ways, is also present in Taylor's post-1860 works. In Tara, for example, Taylor's attempts to present to his readers what he sees as the unknown side of India, while at the same time assuring them that Indians feel and think the

same way they do. Thus in encouraging others to see India as he does, the "alien" nature of Indian life is mitigated by the incorporation of familiar Victorian concepts on such things as home and family. (A point already discussed in some detail in the section on Tara.) Likewise Seeta stresses the domestic concepts present in the life of the eponymous Indian heroine, which prove important justifications for her marriage to Philip Brandon. This appeal to the reader to examine more closely the similarities that exist between "East" and "West", marks Taylor as standing outside the typical "Orientalism" which dominated other contemporary discussions of India, an "Orientalism" whereby images of the East were presented almost exclusively to promote, in Edward Said's opinion, the "difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")."³⁰

A brief discussion of what were typical Victorian concepts of women, love and domesticity is needed in order to view with more clarity what was assimilated in Taylor's texts. Among the points addressed in Walter Houghton's seminal work, The Victorian Frame of Mind, are precisely these Victorian societal views of women, marriage and the home. In tracing the development of the commercial spirit of the nineteenth century, and the positive effect of the industrial revolution on the fortunes of the middle classes, he notes the development of a certain ethos, within the newly risen and influential middle classes, in regard to the role of the family. This ethos becomes, in a sense, an exaltation of the importance of the family and the home in Victorian life. Houghton argues that the idea of family life "was the conception of the home as a source of virtue

and emotions which were nowhere else to be found, least of all in business and society."³¹ This meant that the home was made a haven, "a place apart, a walled garden, in which certain virtues too easily crushed by modern life could be preserved, and certain desires of the heart too much thwarted be fulfilled."³² Thus it became "both a shelter from the anxieties of modern life, a place of peace where the longings of the soul might be realized...and a shelter for those moral and spiritual values which the commercial spirit and the critical spirit were threatening to destroy, and therefore a sacred place, a temple."³³

Certainly this is a major theme in much nineteenth-century fiction and poetry: home is a sacred place, presided over by a high priestess, the wife, who ideally is a combination of humility, artlessness and dutifulness. In Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House", published between 1854 and 1856, and perhaps the piece which most exemplifies Victorian views on domesticity, this view is of central importance, expressing, in the view of Houghton, the "essential character of Victorian love."³⁴ The ideal home is quiet and peaceful, endowed

With temple-like repose, an air
of life's kind purposes pursued
With order'd freedom sweet and fair.
A tent pitch'd in a world not right
It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,
On tranquil faces bore the light
Of duties beautifully done.³⁵

A woman's role is most explicitly seen as firmly entrenched in the house. It is she,

The gentle wife, who decks his board
And makes his day to have no night,

Whose wishes wait upon her lord,
Who finds her own in his delight.³⁶

Ultimately, her role is to make the home the haven men crave for, where love, and worship of the husband, dominates and the world is fended off and left outside the garden wall:

Let love make home a gracious Court;
There let the world's rude, hasty ways
Be fashion'd to a loftier port,
And learn to bow and stand at gaze;
And let the sweet respective sphere
Of personal worship there obtain
Circumference for moving clear,
None treading on another's train.³⁷

This view of women can also be seen in a popular work predating Patmore's verses, Elizabeth Starling's Noble Deeds of Woman. First printed in 1848, and subsequently reprinted well into the 1860s, the work gave examples of female heroism to illustrate the typical virtues the author felt should be present in all women. The work illustrates the typical view displayed in Patmore's work, and others, of the insistence of the alliance of various virtues to successful domestic management. Such virtues as integrity, fortitude, courage and patriotism were preached to women not only as part of their roles in the home, but also as essential to counterbalancing the purely ornamental skills normally taught to middle-class women. As Elizabeth Starling writes in her preface,

Painting, music, and dancing, may afford agreeable recreation, but they must ever yield to the more important pursuits of life: the strict observance of the duties imposed on mother, daughter, sister, wife, and friend, commands the esteem and respect of others, and confers lasting happiness on ourselves.³⁸

"The performance of the domestic obligations," Starling goes on to say, "which are more calculated to court the esteem of the few than

to excite the admiration of the many, is the natural province of the sex."³⁹ For this reason, Starling urges her reader to take to heart the examples of female virtuousness and heroism seen in the subsequent pages of her work, for doing so would allow the ideal unison of "the sublime virtue of patriotism with the exercise of every domestic and social duty."⁴⁰

Part of this emphasis on social virtuousness had to do with the major upheavals seen to be threatening the social fabric of the mid-nineteenth century. One of the major concerns during this period was the threatening menace of the world outside "the garden wall". Fear of the lower classes, a fear particularly heightened by the strength of the Chartist movement of the 1830s and 40s, among other things, and an awareness of what was perceived to be an increasing lack of morality and religious feeling in society at large, presumably helped perpetuate the emphasis on the enclosure and importance of the home, and its subsequent enshrinement of various moral virtues. This is seen particularly in Victorian fiction, much of which was aimed at the middle class reader. As Jenni Calder points out,

'Goodness' required a home, a wife, children, and servants. It needed a door to shut against temptation, corruption and threat. The Victorian novel may be said to be about men and women, but particularly women, seeking protection and fulfilment, and that ideally both are found in the same sources.⁴¹

In Tara we find a presentation of Indian domestic life which would have struck many Victorian readers as little different from their own. From the beginning Taylor stresses the excellent domestic qualities of Tara, and her mother in particular, qualities which would not be amiss in a Victorian household. Tara's mother Anunda, in fact, is held up as an example in her community because of her

domestic skills. She is described as "ignorant of everything but household management, in which she excelled, in all departments, to a degree that made her the envy of her female acquaintance, and her husband the envied of his male associates whose domestic affairs were not conducted with the same regularity, and whose cookery was not so good."⁴² Further Victorian domestic virtues are in evidence in subsequent descriptions of the family home:

Enter the Shastree's house at any time, and you were at once struck with its great neatness. The floor was always plastered with liquid clay by the women-servants when he was absent at the temple for morning worship, and retained a cool freshness while it dried, and, indeed, during the day. It was generally decorated by pretty designs in white and red chalk powder dropped between the finger and thumb, in the execution of which both mother and daughter were very expert and accomplished. The Shastree's seat, which was, in fact, a small raised dais at one side of the large room, was usually decked with flowers, while upon the floor before it, the greatest artistic skill was expended in ornament by Tara and her mother. (p. 4-5)

In this passage several points are in evidence. First of all, what Taylor does here is something pointed out at the beginning of this section, which is, assimilate concepts presumably familiar to most of his Victorian readers into an unfamiliar setting. Here, the familiar concept of cleanliness in the home is seen as it applies to the unfamiliar Hindu household. More importantly, in keeping with Taylor's desire to stress the similarities between Indian and British society, the stereotyped image of the "greasy Hindu babu" (and all that such a phrase implies about the Hindu's personal and domestic habits), often presented by contemporary observers of India, and a frequent image in Kipling's stories, is absent. Secondly, the skills of the women, the artistic skills they display, are not unlike skills thought necessary for middle class Victorian women; in fact the

education of middle class women in the mid-century almost invariably included genteel attainments in the arts. Finally, the aspect of serving the head of the family, of submission and, as it were, worship of the male, is seen here, if only in a symbolic way, in the description of the Shastree's seat, the "small raised dais" which is so skillfully ornamented and bedecked by Tara and her mother. It is one of the few pieces of furniture in the room, and is surrounded by various religious objects which turn it almost into a shrine, as Taylor proceeds to explain:

Above it were pictures of favourite divinities, painted in distemper colour: the amorous blue-throated Krishna playing to the damsels of Muttra; the solemn four-armed Ganesha, sitting with a grave elephant's head on his shoulders; the beautiful Lakshmee and Suruswuti, the goddesses of wealth and learning, the objects of household adoration: and the terrible six-armed Bhowani in her contest with the demon Maheshwur...all surrounded by wreaths of flowers interwoven with delicate border patterns...Thus decorated, the dais had a cheerful effect in the room: and choice and intimate friends only were admitted to the privilege of sitting upon it. (p. 5)

The presentation of the father's chair as part of an area which contains "objects of household adoration" is indicative of the privileged status of the father, a point not unfamiliar perhaps to Victorian readers. The dais also proves to be in the only area in the house containing any major decoration, also indicative of its privileged status. The rest of the house contains little in the way of furnishing, further emphasising the unusual state of the dais:

there was no decoration about the house, except, as we have already mentioned, border patterns and quaintly designed birds and flowers upon the walls. Furniture, such as we need, was unknown. A small cotton or woollen carpet laid down here and there, with a heavy cotton pillow covered with white calico, sufficed for sitting or reclining; and...a cotton mattress on the floor, or a cool mat, sufficed for sleeping. (p.6)

The house is thus devoid of many of the accoutrements possibly familiar to Taylor's Victorian readers. But he immediately draws the reader's attention to its neatness, as well as to its similarity to ancient Roman households, bringing the familiar back into the description:

The house, therefore, would have appeared bare in any of my readers' eyes; but it was neat and pleasant to look at: and one can imagine, though decorated in a higher style of art, the Roman houses at Pompeii to have been similar in most respects of plan and domestic arrangement. (p. 6)

The most explicit presentation of Indian domesticity in Taylor's works is found in Tara. His subsequent novels, Ralph Darnell and Seeta, deal less with this subject. Nevertheless they too present, on occasion, similar points regarding the virtues of their respective Indian heroines. In Ralph Darnell Noor-ool-Nissah, the Indian princess who eventually marries Ralph Darnell, is only briefly sketched in the latter sections of the work, partly because in Ralph Darnell, unlike Tara, the emphasis is on showing the development of British rule and character in eighteenth-century India, rather than in detailing Indian life. The few passages that deal with Noor-ool-Nissah, though, show her to be well educated and possessing of the important female characteristics of all good Victorian heroines. "What could I have told of her in that constant seclusion," Taylor writes, "except that she was patient and submissive, bearing her lot with the calm reliance of her faith?"⁴³ Taylor then writes approvingly of her benevolence and charity. Her life, he notes, soon becomes totally integrated with her husband's: "I mean no profanity when I compare it with that beautiful womanly character of Ruth,

which combines so purely the simplicity, the energy, and the devotion of love."⁴⁴

In Seeta the domestic points of the eponymous heroine are also glossed over, but not to such an extent. Taylor sets Seeta up as an ideal Indian woman, well educated and well versed in domestic duties. One of our first impressions of her family home is of its neatness, a neatness similar to that found in the domestic arrangements in Tara:

Within and without the house was scrupulously clean and pure, and without ornament, except the Sanskrit text, "Sree Govind Prussun," painted in bright yellow letters on the architrave of the outer gate, and in a neatly designed niche in gay colours and pretty patterns, which were traced upon the wall over the master's seat.⁴⁵

As in Tara, cleanliness and emphasis on the importance of the male (the designs around his seat, for example, indicating this), play their part in this household. Likewise the matriarch of the house, in this case Aunt Ella, is especially involved in the management details of the household. At one point Taylor describes her activities, which revolve very much around the keeping of order in the home, while at the same time also pointing to Seeta's aptness in these areas:

If her brother got his food regularly, if the servants were kept busy, if the poor were fed, if the household condiments, and the vermicelli in particular, were nicely prepared, if the buffaloes and cows were milked, and the butter boiled into ghee, if no ceremony, general or household, were neglected -she was satisfied; and if there were an error anywhere, she was miserable till it was corrected. Seeta could do all this as well as her aunt, and in some things she excelled her. Her grandfather would never eat vermicelli except it was prepared by her dainty fingers, and whenever he was ailing no one could please his palate but Seeta.⁴⁶

This concentration on keeping order in the home forms a very important aspect of Victorian housekeeping. As one recent analysis of

views of domesticity in English society points out, order was the all important purpose of women's domestic management:

Her special task was the creation of order in her household, the regular round of daily activity set in motion and kept smoothly ticking over by continued watchfulness; doing everything at the 'right' time, keeping everything and everybody in the 'right' place.⁴⁷

In Seeta's case, this proves of less importance once she moves into Cyril's home. At least, Taylor is not concerned with showing her managing the domestic arrangements, for by now the important issue of her acceptance, or non-acceptance, in Anglo-Indian society is brought in. He does note, however, her particular use of cooking skills to please Cyril. At several points Seeta whips up a quick Indian snack or meal for him after work, meals he seems to enjoy despite being British! "I enjoy your simple food better than all the cook's good things," he remarks to her at one point, although this does not seem to deter him from dashing off afterwards, alone, to various "Anglo-Indian" burra khanas, or big banquets.⁴⁸

Seeta's skills, as I've already discussed in an earlier chapter, are not admired by many of the Anglo-Indian community portrayed in the work. Nor were Taylor's Indian heroines appreciated by the British reading public or literary critics in general. Prejudices, both of race and class, played their part in the rejection of Taylor's portrayal of Indian people and society. The similarity in domestic values between his Indian heroines and his intended Victorian audience could not overcome British societal attitudes concerning class structure, marriage, race and the appropriateness of interracial relations.

First of all, where it came to marriage between classes, mid-century British society shrank at the thought. Views on such liaisons were to find peculiar echoes in similar Anglo-Indian views on interracial marriages. The overriding concern was of the degrading nature of such liaisons, of the baseness almost certainly present in the lower classes, a view of many from the middle and upper classes. One typical example of this attitude was recorded by Arthur Munby, who privately chronicled, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the work and habits of working-class women in many parts of Britain. In 1863 he noted a discussion he had with a certain Miss Williams, concerning a recent marriage between Lord Robert Montagu and his housemaid:

She refused to believe that any such woman could by [any] possibility be refined in nature, or be companionable for a man of education. She knew them by experience: their faces might be pretty and their manners modest, but within, they were full of baseness and vulgarity. And no man of refinement and gentlemanly feelings could ever degrade himself by such an (sic) union....No words could express Miss Williams's disgust at that proceeding.⁴⁹

Fear of societal order being broken down, of the "unwashed masses" burrowing into the social fabric so carefully preserved by middle-class mores, no doubt played its part in such attitudes. Certainly economic considerations were reasons enough for suspecting such class crossovers.

Much has been written of what was in effect a marriage market during the first half of the nineteenth century, of the amount of marriages made based on the anticipated economic or social benefits to be gained by union between two particular families. Houghton quotes one source who wrote in 1854, "A great proportion of the marriages we see around us, did not take place from love at all, but

from some interested motive, such as wealth, social position, or other advantages; in fact it is rare to see a marriage in which true love has been the predominating feeling on both sides."⁵⁰ This perceived commercialisation of marriage has been viewed as another reason why there was an increasing emphasis, in literature and elsewhere, on the importance of romantic love in marriage. As Houghton explains, "It was wise as well as romantic to make love the sanction of marriage, and therefore the supreme object to search for, the jewel more precious than gold."⁵¹ Many important Victorian writers, writers such as Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope and Jane Austen, came to this same conclusion. in works which examined the flaws of the marriage system in British society.

Certainly Taylor himself felt very strongly on this subject. We know from an account by his cousin that Taylor himself married for love, forsaking a dowry in an era when a dowerless woman usually remained an unmarried woman. Even more unusual was the fact, pointed out in an earlier section, that his wife was partly of Indian descent, a point not easily overlooked in a society quick to note and scorn those marked with "a touch of the tar brush". Such attitudes were painfully reminiscent of similar British middle and upper class attitudes to those of lesser breeding, already alluded to earlier.

Critics of later nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian society noted that its attitudes were predominantly suburban and materialist, and no different from middle class views in Britain. Leonard Woolf for example, writing of his experiences in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between 1904 and 1911, viewed the white society he met there as a typical example of British imperial society in general:

In Calcutta and Simla, in Colombo and Nuwara Eliya, the social structure and relations between Europeans rested on the same kind of snobbery, pretentiousness, and false pretensions as they did in Putney or Peckham. No one can understand the aura of life for a young civil servant in Ceylon during the first decade of the twentieth century -or indeed the history of the British Empire- unless he realizes and allows for these facts.⁵²

Such views were not new, and even Meadows Taylor, an uncovenanted advisor belonging neither to the Indian army nor to the civil service, noted the effects that low rank and being an outsider had on his acceptance in society in the 1830s. In an episode in his autobiography, meant to be humorous, he recalls how, following his promotion to adjutant, he was vetted at a dance by a watchful mother. Assured that he was an adjutant, she allows her daughter to dance with him, as "He is quite eligible now."⁵³ Taylor's only comment is to ask, "Are mammas still so watchful?"⁵⁴

The answer, if one were to ask a later critic of British colonialism, George Orwell, would have been an emphatic yes. In Burmese Days, for example, published in 1934, his portrayal of the stratification of British society in Burma, meant to stand for Anglo-Indian society in general, is particularly venomous and stereotyped, but nevertheless revealing of the peculiarly Anglo-Indian class structure still in place at such a late stage in the Indian Empire. A young unmarried British woman is introduced into the small upstation community of Kyauktada, and is soon paired off with the protagonist of the work, John Flory, a debilitated British timber merchant (a civilian). Elizabeth's aunt, however, soon steers Elizabeth to pursue Verrall, a young upper-class officer temporarily stationed in the district, for as a military officer, and the youngest son of a peer, Verrall is a much better catch than a mere civilian merchant. The

point is clear; officers of the army, particularly high ranking ones, are always to be preferred to civilians, regardless of wealth or personality. Only when Verrall leaves the district without proposing to Elizabeth does Flory suddenly emerge again as a likely candidate. He is ultimately disgraced when his recently discarded native mistress seeks him out publicly in church to demand money.

Certainly class and racial prejudices feature among the major criticisms of British society and rule in India in the second half of the nineteenth century. The petty nature of Anglo-Indian society, its materialist rating of individuals according to rank and salary, and its isolation from the people it was supposed to be governing, are details familiar to readers of Kipling's short stories on India. Yet there were changes in the type of people willing to work in India, and in particular in the British attitudes in respect to liaisons with Indian women.

The early days of British involvement in India were marked by a laissez faire attitude to interracial relationships. This was in keeping with the largely commercial, informal status of the seventeenth and eighteenth century East India Company in India. Content with extracting the most profit from India with the minimum of turmoil, the early British agents and traders found it best to adapt to the customs and practices native to India, rather than to seek to impose their own set of values on a country they had no intention of settling in permanently. Thus in 1692 the British authorities in Madras could still regard it as an appropriate and necessary mark of respect for the president and members of the Council to wear native dress to receive a Mogul embassy.⁵⁵

Among the first barriers to break down once trading posts had been installed were the interracial ones. The early traders, most of whom were little better than freebooters and less than ideal examples of western culture and civilization, were not ones to resist the temptations of Indian nautches and the joys of a harem.⁵⁶ Many Englishmen in the eighteenth century took on Indian mistresses as a matter of course during their stay in India. Each trading post had its own way of dealing with this custom: while some directors encouraged such liaisons as a means of "calming" their men down, others took active steps to discourage such contact.

In Bombay the Company directors copied the Portuguese custom of drafting out a supply of women to India, an expensive proposition. These "were classed as 'gentlewomen' and 'other women'," and were guaranteed a one year stipend to cover their costs until they found suitable husbands.⁵⁷ Madras officials, on the other hand, thought importation of women too expensive to be a realistic solution. They decided to "induce by all means our soldiers to marry with the native women because it will be impossible to get ordinary young women to pay their own passages."⁵⁸ The Court of Directors in England approved and even went so far as to write to Madras officials in 1687 recommending the policy of interracial marriage, as the marriage of Christian British soldiers to native women was

a matter of such consequence to posterity that we shall be content to encourage it with some expense and have been thinking for the future to appoint a pagoda to be paid to the mother of any child that shall hereafter be born, of any such future marriage, upon the day the child be christened, if you think this small encouragement will increase the number of such marriages.⁵⁹

The christening payments were not formally abolished until 1835, by which time it had become obvious that such practices were no longer compatible with Britain's imperial ideology.

With the rapid expansion of British power in the eighteenth century, and the simultaneous decline of French, Dutch and Portuguese influence, the East India Company's role in India changed. The Company became a ruling power, often dealing indirectly in Indian affairs through puppet prince rulers who were consistently enthroned or toppled to protect British interests and sources of income. As the nature of its position changed, the East India Company's servants changed. The early breed of British agents, "nabobs" who were interested in achieving personal enrichment in the shortest time possible, were slowly edged out by a more dedicated breed of Company servant. Robert Clive and Warren Hastings instituted measures in the late eighteenth century to cut off bribes and grants to individuals from Indian states for services rendered, a measure which provoked much grumbling from many who had recently come over to India hoping to benefit from such revenues. It was somewhat ironic that these rulings were established by two individuals who either had made or, in the case of Warren Hastings, were suspected of making large fortunes from such dealings. In 1809 the first concerted attempt to provide an educational training for Company civil servants was begun with the founding of Haileybury College, which provided instruction for several hundred candidates until its demise in 1858. These were the first products of an emphasis on academic attainment which was to evolve into a competitive examination system for appointment to a formal Indian Civil Service.

The creation of a professional bureaucracy in the nineteenth century brought with it a new attitude towards Indians and the role of the British in India. The advent of industrialisation, utilitarian doctrines, and increased evangelicalism, as well as a certain air of condescension born out of increasing contact with non-European people, contributed to an arrogant attitude in British policy towards Indians. As Ronald Hyam points out in Britain's Imperial Century, industrialisation "enormously increased the disparity in power between Britain and the rest of the world, and induced contempt for those regions which did not experience it,"⁶⁰ while prominent British utilitarians who, like James Mill, had considerable influence in shaping government policy in India, "found much to condemn from the secular point of view in the social organisation of Asian societies."⁶¹ The various concepts about native races that were prevalent in the eighteenth century, such as the romantic idealisation of the noble savage and even the belief in the homogeneity of mankind, were now found less often than distressing views on the dark and superstitious minds of natives.

In his Physics and Politics, written in 1866, Walter Bagehot summed up the attitude that pervaded nineteenth-century policy:

A modern savage is anything but the simple being which philosophers of the eighteenth century imagined him to be: on the contrary, his life is twisted into a thousand curious habits; his reason is darkened by a thousand strange prejudices, his feelings are frightened by a thousand cruel superstitions. The whole mind of a modern savage is, so to say, tattooed over with monstrous images; there is not a smooth place anywhere about it.⁶²

Yet this attitude is found more in writings on Africans than on Indians. British views of Indians were more complicated and at times contradictory. On the one hand Indians were seen as simple children

who merely needed a firm hand to govern them and set them on the right path. On the other hand, following the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Indians, particularly Hindus, were portrayed as dangerous and devious creatures who required careful watching. Complicating the matter further were the generalised characterisations of Indians according to their religious faiths. Muslims were often honoured for their warlike and fiercely independent natures. Hindus were often seen as weak, superstitious and generally unreliable people. Such ideas coloured descriptions of 'the native mind', as can be seen in the following passage from G.O. Trevelyan's Competition Wallah:

In the constitution of the native mind, the fundamental characteristic is want of stamina, and this defect is the favourite text of the abuse levelled against the Hindoo by his enemies. The secret of our rapid conquest and secure tenure of the country is the absence of energy among the inhabitants.⁶³

Yet these characterisations of Indians were often contradicted by other statements extolling the fidelity and courage of the native soldier, particularly the native soldier who had stood by his British master in the time of crisis.

Contradictory views of the average Indian vacillated according to who was doing the analysing. Many missionaries stressed the superstitious and cruel nature of Hinduism, and equally excoriated the Muslim creed for advocating the suppression and subordination of women. (And this from Westerners whose society had its own form of female suppression to deal with.) Very generally speaking the opinions of the Anglo-Indian civil servant of the late nineteenth century tended to group around certain stereotypes. Assumptions about Hindus, for example, ranged between the traditional stereotype of the tractable, mild Hindu and the opposed view of the cruel,

scheming Oriental who had to be ruled with a strong hand.⁶⁴ If military attitudes were more sympathetic, they were also still judgmental: in such views racial characteristics could be described in terms of martial accomplishments and could be broken down by region. Marathans and Pathans, for example, were seen as superior to Bengalis because of their more forceful fighting spirit. But, in all cases, the pervading attitude was that the Indian could never accomplish anything by himself; he needed the British, superior to himself, to keep him in line, if he was to progress.

As Philip Mason points out in his excellent study of the history of the Indian army, such generalisations were wrong, particularly when they were used to account for Britain's conquest of India. It was the lack of unity between the Indian states and a lack of appropriate training and strategy that contributed most to Indian defeats in battle, not a lack of energy. As for Indian laziness, the strength and energy with which both Hindus and Muslims pursued careers in the Indian army testified to the inaccuracy of such statements.⁶⁵

G.O. Trevelyan also described common conceptions regarding the unreliability of the average Hindoo:

The ordinary Hindoo has no feeling about the sacredness of toil. Honest, faithful performance you will expect from him in vain. A drunken, debauched mechanic in our own country will turn out what work he does, in first-rate style. A knavish, dissipated groom will bring your horse to the door in perfect condition, with not a hair out of place, as fresh as he himself was the evening before. A native, on the contrary, must be watched from morning till night. He has no sense of shame in the manner of laziness, and considers himself horribly ill used if he is kept to his duty.⁶⁶

Such conceptions were often allied with denunciations of the Hindu religion to create a totally unfavourable picture of the Hindu, a picture which was not confined solely to British observers. In Images of Asia, for example, Harold Isaacs records samples of mid-nineteenth century American missionary reports on Hindus, which parallel many contemporary Anglo-Indian views on Hindu practices. "A mild example," he notes,

would be the complaint, in 1852, about "the deplorable ignorance and stubborn prejudices of the Hindus, together with the caste system, their entire absence of all correct principles, and finally their moral degradation." The Hindus, one might more commonly have heard, were "lifetime liars and worshippers of a stupendous system of carnal idolatry."⁶⁷

These characterisations merely reinforced British views on its right to administer India. Those who came to govern India grew confident that to progress as a nation India needed British education, leadership, and skills such as engineering which, united with a moral and truthful religion, Christianity, would make it the paragon of a Western-bred Asiatic nation.

The revival of evangelicalism in Britain at the end of the eighteenth and the turn of the nineteenth century brought with it a dedicated group of people who sought to reform the "barbarous" and "idolatrous" practitioners of Hinduism and Islam. The Charter Act of 1813, which allowed missionaries officially to enter India for the first time, was passed in Parliament in response to a growing missionary appeal for action, and various religious organisations lost no time in setting up missions all over India.

The missionaries soon found themselves occupying uncomfortable positions in both British and Indian society. They were members of a

ruling class that, for the most part, paid lip service to the concept of close ties with their Indian subjects but physically isolated itself from the general populace by living in civil stations built next to but apart from Indian towns. Most missionaries, however, were committed to building close relations with Indians and to converting them to a British way of life few Indians appreciated. Many missionaries believed their role in both societies to be incompatible and quite forthrightly condemned British hypocrisy, along with Indian immorality, for holding back progress in India.⁶⁸ Numerous missionaries chose to separate themselves from the British community and live in the Indian towns surrounded by Indians. The Salvation Army encouraged its members to adopt Indian lifestyles, and some not only did so but completed their absorption of Indian customs by marrying Indian converts.

While the Salvation Army encouraged its members to "go native" in order better to understand Indians, the official elite frowned on such behaviour. As the nineteenth century progressed the Indian Civil Service grew more dominated by men who regarded themselves as gentlemen. These men typically represented "An amalgam of the less flighty qualities of the nobility with the more stodgy of middle class virtues."⁶⁹

The ethos of "Muscular Christianity", which Thomas Arnold fostered at Rugby College in the first half of the nineteenth century, was transported to and transmuted in the hot climate of India by the public school graduates who swelled the ranks of the Indian Civil Service in the second half of the nineteenth century. Class

attitudes that existed in England were transplanted to India, and entrenched themselves in the isolated air of Anglo-Indian society.

Such class structures were conveniently welded to racial attitudes that excluded most Indians from social contact with the British. An aristocratic barrier was erected and, as A.L. Basham remarked, the British came to think of themselves as a caste, infinitely superior to the rest.⁷⁰ Thus an inflexible and denigrating view, on the part of the Anglo-Indian hierarchy, of its own people and of the people it was ruling, encouraged by seemingly insurmountable barriers of language and religion, strengthened the gap between rulers and ruled, obliterating earlier, more tolerant Anglo-Indian views. It also mimicked similar changes in British societal attitudes and class structure.

As the distance between the populace and the rulers increased, so did the impossibility of interracial relationships. In the early nineteenth century, having an Indian mistress or marrying a native was frowned upon but tolerated. With the influx of missionaries, and the immigration of more British women to India following the opening of a quicker and easier route overland to India through Egypt in 1830, tolerance of such behaviour decreased rapidly. There were no excuses anymore for not turning to the pleasurable company of one's own kind, as the number of unmarried British women in India rose with each passing year. Those men who insisted on carrying on love affairs with Indian women, or worse still marrying them, risked being snubbed by, and isolated from, polite Anglo-Indian society, although the civil servants who lived in more isolated and remote government outposts were less circumscribed by the watchful eyes and tongues of

malicious gossips than their counterparts in the larger Anglo-Indian communities. This was especially evident in British Burma, where marriages and affairs between British soldiers and civil servants and Burmese women were common through to the twentieth century.⁷¹

The issue of miscegenation in Taylor's novels has already been noted in earlier chapters, in particular Seeta, where interracial marriage is a central theme. As already mentioned elsewhere, the success of these relationships differs according to the periods in which they're set. Mixed marriages, Taylor means to show, were condoned and more accepted in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century, thus the different outcome of Ralph Darnell and Seeta. In Ralph Darnell, the mixed marriage between Ralph and Noor-ool-Nissah flourishes, without the societal restrictions which prove so disastrous for the characters in Seeta.

Of importance, though, is the isolated setting in which the female and male protagonists develop their feelings for each other. In almost all of Taylor's works, the sick bed proves of crucial importance in throwing the protagonists together, whether they be Indian or British. Tying in with this is the point that the relationships between female and male protagonists in his works flourish best in isolation, away from society. This is particularly true of Seeta, for example, where Seeta and Cyril face extreme pressure from society and family when in residence in the British cantonment. No such pressures are present when they are on tour in Cyril's district.

The possibilities of interracial relations flourishing for a short while in isolation is present in Kipling's works as well. The

difference, however, lies in Kipling's view that inevitably such alliances end in tragedy. "Beyond the Pale" demonstrates this. An affair between a British official and an Indian woman, conducted in secrecy, ends in tragedy: the woman's hands are cut off by her vengeful husband, and the transgressing Anglo-Indian carries a permanent reminder of his action in the form of a limp, caused by a spear thrust to his groin. In "Without Benefit of Clergy", Kipling's most fully realised portrait of an interracial relationship, tragedy is again the end result. The relationship between Holden and Ameena flourishes in an isolation which is only broken by the death of Ameena and their child from cholera. In the end nothing remains to mark the spot where the two had shared their lives, their mud residence having washed away with the rains and its timber foundations having been sold for scrap wood.

Referring back to Taylor's prevalence for sick bed encounters, Henry Bruce has noted that this can be traced to his own personal experience. In 1826 Taylor fell ill while travelling to Hyderabad, and was taken in and nursed by an Indian family. As he writes, it was his first introduction to the house of "a native gentleman", and he was treated extremely well:

"You are to be one of the family," said my host; "you are only a boy, and the ladies will not mind you. My wife will look after you, and the children shall play with you, and I will send on your letters to Hyderabad."⁷²

This incident, as Bruce notes in his editing of Taylor's autobiography, "made an ineffaceable impression upon Taylor's heart and imagination...its influence may, without fancifulness, be traced in various scenes of his subsequent novels."⁷³

Thus in Tippoo Sultaun, for example, it is while the Indian hero, Kasim Ali, is recovering from wounds sustained in battle, under the care of his patron's wife, Ameena, that the two discover how deeply in love they are with each other. This initial discovery has to wait until the husband's death before blossoming further, but the sick bed encounter lays the romantic foundation for their future relationship. Likewise in Tara, Tara and Fazil develop a love for each other while she helps nurse him back to health. And tying in with the importance of this isolation, their relationship undergoes its severest trial when Tara is kidnapped by the work's villain, Moro Trimmul, and must defend herself against charges of impropriety levelled at her because of her residence in Fazil's Muslim household. Similar encounters between female and male protagonists mark Ralph Darnell, Seeta and A Noble Queen. In all cases it allows a plausible contact to develop between the male characters, in particular the British protagonists, and their Indian carers. It also allows the British characters an unusual insight into Indian family life, helping them to develop positive and sympathetic attitudes used in later dealings with Indians.

One point that must be noted is that Taylor at least admits and presents the possibilities of fruitful contact between differing races and religion. And on the whole these relationships are successful. Both Tara, which looks at contact between Muslim and Hindu, and Ralph Darnell, end happily. Likewise it is obvious that Taylor wanted to end Seeta happily. But Taylor's view is an exception. Most of the writers on Anglo-India who followed saw little hope for successful interracial encounters, and avoided dealing with

them in their fiction. The general feeling can be summed up with Kipling's opening sentences in "Beyond the Pale":

A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go the White and the Black to the Black. Then whatever trouble falls is in the ordinary course of things -neither sudden, alien, nor unexpected.⁷⁴

Where Taylor had more success with the critics was in his representation of Indian landscape. As noted in previous sections, his contemporaries praised the effective use he made in his novels of Indian landscape. Certainly in his later works, such as Tara and Seeta, the setting forms an integral part of the narrative. His view of India contrasts with the "Oriental" presentations of his predecessors.

In fact, of Taylor's works, only one, "The Fatal Armlet", published in The Keepsake in 1840, explicitly adheres to the "Orientalist" tradition of using India solely as a vague backdrop for romance. A tale of the supernatural, it details the story of an Indian courtier who steals an armlet supposedly endowed with magical powers from his king. As punishment for this crime, he is walled up alive and left to die. The story begins with stock images of lush and vaguely Oriental surroundings. It is a cool Indian evening,

when not a vapour exists to dim the brilliancy of the moon's rays which then pour a flood of silvery light upon the beautiful earth, unknown to western climes, and fill it with a glorious radiance, -when many a coy and delicate flower which had denied itself to the garish sun, opens its heart to the cool night, and rejoices as it gives forth its fragrance, -when the air becomes loaded with perfume from tree and flower which existed not by day, as if it was intended to perfect that voluptuous love which only knoweth existence there.⁷⁵

The Indian courtier lies with his love "under a canopy formed by the beauteous creeper that only opens by night, and into the large white

flowers of which the silver light of heaven creeps, as they one by one expand their modest beauties to the moon."⁷⁶ Here we can see that Taylor is working within the framework of earlier Oriental tales, using similar romantic imagery in his landscape. This overblown exotica is an unusual departure for him, though, a feature we don't see in his other works.

Even an earlier work, Confessions of a Thug (1839), stands outside the regular pattern of such loosely romantic presentations, primarily because the work is presented from the point of view of an Indian criminal, rather than of a European protagonist. Thus, to begin with, although many of the descriptive passages are routine and vague, the few detailed descriptive passages that do occur are viewed through an Indian perspective. A prime example of this is Ameer Ali's first sighting of the sea, which overwhelms him, for "when I saw it first, methought I could have fallen down and worshiped (sic) it, it appeared so illimitable, its edge touching as it were the heavens, and spread out into an expanse which the utmost stretch of my imagination could not compass, -a fit type, I thought, of the God of all people, whom every one thinks on; while the hoarse roar of the waves as they rolled on mountain after mountain, and broke in angry fury against the shore, seemed to be a voice of the Omnipotence which could not fail to awaken emotions of awe and dread in the most callous and unobservant!"⁷⁷

What is remarkable about this passage is the way Taylor presents Ameer's reaction to what for Europeans was a familiar feature of Indian landscape. A European could hardly view the Indian ocean in that light, since reaching India involved crossing it. Ameer's

reaction is powerful and fresh, and is interpreted in a form which seems appropriate to the occasion. That the vastness and power of the sea should be seen as reflective of the power of Allah, or the God of all peoples, and in terms of the mountains and thunder, familiar to him in the interior of the continent, adds both to the depiction of the landscape and to our knowledge of Ameer's character.

Elsewhere Indian landscapes and rituals are presented in similar terms, and again these passages go beyond mere surface description to encompass an element of Ameer's character. One passage which deserves mention is a description of the Indian festival of Dasara, or Dussera, in particular because it demonstrates Taylor's own assimilation of Indian culture. In a letter written on arrival in India in 1824, and quoted in his autobiography, Taylor makes a passing reference to this festival. He notes: "This is a festival day, and the natives walk in a sort of procession, with a kind of drum, making a terrible noise. They dress up in the most ridiculous manner, carry torches in their hands, and go on with all sorts of antics."⁷⁸ Taylor's initial impression of this Indian tradition was thus the typical response of the European newcomer to India, who knows little of the customs and concepts behind such celebrations. The festival is seen as an alien spectacle which makes little sense and looks strange.

In Confessions of a Thug, though, written in 1837-8, we can see a change in Taylor's impressions of the festival. His deeper knowledge of, and insight into, what lies behind the outward strange celebration of the Dasara contributes to an entirely different presentation of the festival. For one thing, Taylor is more aware of

the details behind the celebration. The depiction is now sharply defined and more immediate. As the torchlight procession arrives, its initial appearance is strikingly noted by Ameer:

I had not observed it, though I had heard the hum of voices; the gloom of the street had hitherto prevented my distinguishing anything; but as torch after torch was lighted and raised aloft on immense poles, the sea of human heads revealed itself. There were thousands. The street was so packed from side to side, that to move was impossible; the mass was closely wedged together, and we waited impatiently for the time when it should be put in motion, to make the tour of the city.⁷⁹

The claustrophobic nature of the crowd dissipates as the procession moves on, but the subsequent passages underline Ameer's initial impression of the vastness and power of this mass, and coincide with the similar impact of the mass and expanse of the sea noted in the earlier description. Both evoke an overwhelming reaction of religious fervour. Throughout these sections, Taylor emphasises the religious nature of these moments, noting how, for example, the crowd reacts with deafening shouts and agitation to the appearance of the holy relic central to the procession. To Ameer, the moment of its appearance is revelatory. It appears in a glare of blue light, gleaming "with intense brightness; and, as it stood out against the deep blue of the sky, it seemed to be a sudden creation of the genii -so grand, so unearthly,- while the numberless torches, overpowered by the superior brightness of the fireworks, gave a dim and lurid light through their smoke, which, as there was not a breath of wind, hung over them."⁸⁰ The ultimate effect of all this is a heightened religious fervour, which Ameer insists has to be viewed to be understood. "Such a scene must be seen to be felt!" He tells his British interrogator, continuing, "I say felt, Sahib, for who could

see a mighty multitude like that, collected for a holy purpose with one heart, one soul, without emotion?"⁸¹

What distinguishes the descriptive passages in Confessions of a Thug, and many of Taylor's successive works, is the attitude that underneath the surface appearance of India lies a deeper type of reality that has to be felt to be understood and presented. In seeking to present this view of India, Taylor, as one reviewer notes, "definitely ranged himself with those writers to whom fact was more than fancy, and to whom the East was something more tangible than a nebulous world of romance."⁸² This does not mean he shuns the use of routine Eastern romantic images in his works. (See for example my discussion of the recurring theme of romantic rescues of Eastern maidens in distress in Confessions of a Thug.) What it indicates, though, is Taylor's willingness to search beyond that routine vocabulary of "Orientalism" for a deeper and more realistic depiction of India.

Taylor, however, eschews this type of first person narration in his subsequent works, and as a result his depiction of the Indian landscape, while still seeking to be realistic, changes accordingly. His next work, the historical romance Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War, for example, follows along the lines of Walter Scott's historical novels in emphasising the adventurous aspects of life in India, and takes up where Scott had ended in his one attempt at an Indian romance, A Surgeon's Daughter. Nevertheless Taylor, as already pointed out in an earlier chapter, differs substantially from Scott in his view of India, not only in his more specific presentation of Indian scenery, but also in his emphasis on the homesickness of his

British protagonist, a theme common to many later Anglo-Indian novels. This theme, as noted previously, is brought out in Taylor's frequent references to the painful effect on the British protagonist of the resemblance of the Indian scenery to his native countryside.

A longing for home proved popular in late nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian fiction, popular not only with the novelists but also with the readers. Kipling's success with his Plain Tales from the Hills, showed that the British at least, were more interested in aspects of India that dealt with the exiled community than with the population it was ruling. And Kipling's descriptions of India, more often than not, are used to display their effects on the British, a point not often developed in Taylor's work.

This point can be seen in the differing uses Kipling and Taylor make of similar aspects of Indian topography. Taylor's Tippoo Sultaun, for example, opens with a description of a dust storm; this also figures prominently in one of Kipling's early stories, "A False Dawn". Taylor describes a group of Indian travellers who get caught in the midst of what, at first, appears to be a few dull clouds. These clouds are described in detail. They are seen to "break away from the mass and scurry along the face of the heavens, apparently close to their heads, and far below the larger ones which hung heavily above them."⁸³ The first clouds are replaced by a dull reddish cloud, and

at last a low moaning was heard, -a distant sound, as if of rushing water. The rack above them redoubled its pace, and went fearfully fast: every instant increased the blackness on each side and behind. They could no longer see any separate clouds above, but one dense brown black ropy mass, hurrying onwards, impelled by the mighty wind. Soon nothing was visible but a bright line all round the horizon, except in front, where the wall of red dust, which proved that the previous rains had not extended far beyond where they were,

every moment grew higher and higher, and came nearer and nearer.⁸⁴

The storm mounts in intensity, and soon little whirlwinds appear, through which "small quantities of leaves and dry grass were everywhere seen flying along near the ground over the plain."⁸⁵ At last the travellers are engulfed in dust and wind, "As if the whole power of the winds of heaven had been collected and poured forth bodily upon one spot, and that where they stood."⁸⁶

In "A False Dawn", a group of British picnickers are caught in a similar dust storm, a storm which none of them are prepared for, but which at least one member of the party, the narrator, admits was foreseeable. "I saw that the horizon to the north carried a faint, dun-coloured feather," he states before the group heads off to the picnic area, adding, "But no one would have thanked me for spoiling so well-managed an entertainment as this picnic -and a dust storm, more or less, does no great harm."⁸⁷ While the narrator is confident of the party's capability to physically withstand the effects of the storm, he is unprepared for the psychological havoc it wreaks. This is reflected in the presentation of the storm, which differs substantially from Taylor's own depiction. For a start the storm is described from the viewpoint of one caught in the middle of it:

I had felt that the air was growing hotter and hotter; but nobody seemed to notice it until the moon went out and a burning hot wind began lashing the orange-trees with a sound like the noise of the sea. Before we knew where we were the dust-storm was on us, and everything was roaring, whirling darkness.⁸⁸

The dust storm creates a nightmarish atmosphere, an "evil dream", as the narrator explains, where he ends up chasing someone through "a burning hot wind blowing that brought up a stench of stale brick-

kilns with it; and through the half-light and through the dust-devils..."⁸⁹; it also brings an air "heavy with dust and sand from the bed of the river, that filled boots and pockets, and drifted down necks, and coated eyebrows and moustaches."⁹⁰

The differences between this passage and that of Tippoo Sultaun are obvious: Kipling's description is much tighter and more compact, Taylor's description more detailed. But while both use similar phrases to describe, for example, the sound of the storm (Taylor describes it sounding "as if of rushing water", while Kipling describes it sounding "like the noise of the sea"), they apply their descriptions to different ends. Taylor is more interested in describing what an Indian dust storm looks like. Thus the physical and psychological effects on his Indian characters are not stressed. In fact, one could place any sort of traveller, European or Indian, in the narrative and not change the overall effect of this section. This cannot be done in "A False Dawn", where Kipling is mainly concerned to describe what an Indian dust storm feels like, and how it physically and psychologically affects his British characters.

Thus in Kipling's hands, the landscape and the weather are more than just features of India. They are parts of an environment which must be overcome. Kipling's dust-storm attacks suddenly, enveloping Europeans unprepared for or initially unconcerned about this sudden change in Indian weather. Taylor's dust-storm, on the other hand, is a description pure and simple, and observable alike by Europeans and Indians. In Taylor's hands it becomes something essentially extraordinary, a feature unique to Indian landscape, which adds to India's lure and mystery, however unpleasant to deal with. Clearly

in these sections Taylor's India is less threatening than Kipling's, and Taylor's writing displays more confidence in his characters' capacity to survive in, and deal with, this landscape and country.

If the key aspects of Taylor's landscape descriptions are their unique qualities and their specificity to India, these are points which also extend to the themes of his works. Taylor's novels are pointedly set during important periods in Indian history, events unique to India, and the plots are embedded in the Indian landscape. The action takes place in and around well-known Indian cities and landmarks, which Taylor describes fully. Unlike his predecessors' works, one cannot take away the setting without affecting the storyline.

This specificity is part of Taylor's plan for the "new phase of illustrative fiction" he hoped to introduce with his novel Tara. (A point already noted in my discussion of Taylor's life and publishing history.) But Taylor felt that works on India needed to do more than just introduce specific and distinct images of India. In an 1865 review of Lady Duff Gordon's Letters from Egypt, Taylor made clear what he saw should be the ultimate result of such literary efforts. Remarking on a series of landscape photographs he had seen, he makes the point that they lack a key feature -life. "There were cities and towns," he explains, "magnificent streets, facades of palaces and cathedrals, ruins ancient and modern, in which every detail of architecture was represented with a literal exactness and splendour of effect only attainable by a sun-picture...but wanting in the one charm which was most needed -that life without which all were as scenes in a gorgeous but deserted land."⁹¹ Taylor felt that a writer

needed to reach beyond mere description to succeed in fully representing India, and such efforts required an in-depth knowledge and presentation of the people who inhabited these landscapes.

Taylor's confidence in his knowledge of India and Indians proves a major factor in his approach to his writing. As one who claims to "know" India better than most, Taylor seeks to impart his knowledge to his reading public, to make India understandable to them. He describes areas of India he had seen or passed through, and in many cases brings in, almost verbatim, passages he had written at other times for non-fictional works on India. Their inclusion is meant to add authenticity to the works, to fix his characters in a genuine and recognisably realistic setting. An example of this is the description in Tara of the legend surrounding a temple and its wishing stone. (A description already discussed in an earlier section.) The legend and the temple are described in detail, and Taylor emphasises the authenticity of this description with a footnote, at the bottom of the page, which explains the purpose of the wishing stone. Aside from authenticating Taylor's description, the note also affirms the place such sites have in the lives of the Indian people, bringing us back to Taylor's view of the purpose of such passages.

Not only do Taylor's close descriptions of scenery bring a note of authenticity to his works, they also serve to add to the mood and atmosphere. Prior to Afzul Khan's march to Pratabgarh, for example, Taylor inserts a description of the Marathan countryside. It is detailed with an artist's eye for colour, the mountains of the Western Ghats wreathed in the evening with the "rich colours of the fast-rising vapours," which make them

glow like fire; and peak and precipice, forest and glen, are bathed in gold and crimson light; or, as the light grows dimmer, shrouded in deep purple shadow till they disappear in the gloom which quickly falls on all.⁹²

The specific images give us the impression that they are taken from direct observation, that Taylor writes from experience. The subsequent detailing of Sivaji's Pratabgarh fortress is similarly specific:

At various periods of time -by the early Mahratta chieftains of the country in remote ages, and afterwards by their Mussulman conquerors- walls and towers had been added to the natural defences of the place, as well as strong gateways, protected by bastions and loopholed traverses, on the only approach to the summit -a rugged pathway, which could hardly be called a road. Under very ordinary defences, the place was perfectly impregnable to all attacks by an enemy from without. (p. 403)

This specificity helps draw the reader into the story, makes it that much easier to imagine.

Not all of Taylor's landscapes are shaded so brightly, though. Dark tones are also used to foreshadow mood and atmosphere in his landscapes. There are several examples of this in his works, and perhaps the most striking of these descriptions is found in Tara, where Taylor uses landscape in an early section to mirror the mood surrounding a meeting among dacoits, or highway robbers. Taylor's presentation of the scene, purposely emphasising the desolate nature of the surrounding landscape, is meant to increase the reader's sense of unease at what is being planned. (In this case, the waylaying of a messenger carrying important documents.) In a remarkable five page description of Indian scenery, he adds special emphasis by presenting it as a complete chapter in itself (Chapter 9).

Taylor begins the section by describing the heavy rain and ominous clouds sweeping the area. It is a dark picture, which contrasts with Taylor's usual bright presentation of Indian landscape:

The sky was one uniform tint of dark grey, in which, near the horizon, some yellowish, lurid colour occasionally appeared. Dark masses of cloud came up slowly from the south-west at times, causing a deeper gloom as they passed overhead, accompanied by bursts of rain, which sometime fell in sheets, deluging the ground, and dashing up muddy spray from the soft earth. The air was stifling; and there was a strong sulphurous smell with the rain, which increased the disagreeable effect of the close, hot atmosphere. (p. 56)

Taylor very effectively sets the tone of the chapter with this description. The image of the rain "dashing up muddy spray" as it hits the ground vividly conveys the strength of the deluge, and the smell accompanying it also adds to the initial impressions of closeness, and of stagnancy.

Taylor then moves to a description of the plain affected by this deluge. Here the rain creates "a steamy mist rising from the previously heated earth, which increased the already existing dimness and gloom." (p. 56) Out of this gloom a few trees, "which appeared tall and ghostly in the grey light and thick air, stood out more in detail as the rain slackened for a while, and seemed to give promise of breaking." (p. 56) Taylor's emphasis on the dimness and ghostliness of the scene heightens the gloomy picture established in the first paragraph.

A village is briefly brought into focus, but the eventual objective of the section is the aforementioned plain, "the summit of a small eminence, below which, in a valley watered by a rivulet, was a village surrounded by tall crops of grain, now coming into ear, mingled with fields of cotton, as yet very low, and pulse, and other

cereals, generally about waist-high." (p. 57) The spot is desolate and difficult to reach, and Taylor's description of it is worth quoting at length:

The spot was remarkable as the highest point for along distance either way upon the road-track; and indeed, had the day been clear, a large extent of country could have been seen from it in all directions. Now, however, the view was very limited; and on the opposite sides from the two villages nothing could be seen but a plain, thinly covered with grass and bushes, and strewn thickly with black stones, which, uncultivated as it was for miles, looked doubly desolate through the misty air, being partially covered with pools of water of a yellowish brown colour, the result of the present rain....

The plain was, as we have said, very stony, and at the place we allude to, the heap of stones had been formed gradually by travellers who, coming from all sides, took up one from the path, and threw it, with a prayer to the local divinity, upon the pile. This had been done, no doubt, for centuries; still the stones upon the path appeared as thick as ever, and sorely impeded and harassed all travellers, whether on foot or horseback.

Over this heap of stones grew a large banian, and close to it several scraggy neem trees; a peepul, too, had once existed, but was dead. Part of the trunk and one large branch remained standing, white and dry, and a portion of another lay on the ground, from which chips of firewood had been cut from time to time. It looked as if it had been struck with lightning, which, indeed, was not improbable, as several branches of the banian were scathed and riven, probably from the same cause. Of all these trees, however, the banian or "burr" as it is called in the language of the country, was most remarkable.

Not possessed of the luxuriant foliage common to this tree in other places, probably because the soil was too poor and rocky, its huge gnarled boughs were bare of small branches and leaves; some were naked and actually withered, others apparently so, and all stretched their white gaunt arms into the sky, with a wild and ghastly effect against the leaden grey of the clouds. In process of the centuries of its existence, several boughs had become detached from the parent trunk, and were upheld by stems which had once been pendant roots, and had struck into the ground. These portions, if anything more bare, and more gnarled and twisted than the parent tree, rose loftily into the air, and with the same effect we have already noticed.

The larger boughs and stems were full of holes, which sheltered a numerous colony of small grey tree owls, whose bright yellow eyes stared from behind large boughs, and out

of crevices in the trunks, or from among the ornaments of the roof of the temple below; while they kept up a perpetual twittering, as if they conversed together, which indeed perhaps they did. On hot bright days lizards, large and small, crept out of crevices and basked in the sun; and among them a family of huge black ones, with bright eyes and scarlet throats, which they inflated as they appeared to swell with importance. Shepherd boys believed these to be evil spirits, and if they were brave, pelted them with stones, or if otherwise ran off, as one of them issued forth and looked about curiously. (p. 57-58)

It is a remarkable passage, displaying the qualities which mark Taylor's landscape descriptions. The description is built up piece by piece, one detail being added to another, much as if each point was a different layer of paint added to a canvas. These landscape details, though, not only give an air of verisimilitude to the whole description, but also develop symbolic aspects of threat and abundance, thus establishing the emotional "field" of the work. Taylor's presentation of the banyan tree, for example, illustrates this dual symbolism of threat and abundance. The tree's branches, stretched up into the sky, present powerful and sinister images. Yet that life does exist amongst the tree branches and roots shows that the landscape is not as barren and threatening as one is given to expect. Pilgrims passing by gain some benefit from these sullen, bare branches, as attested to by the chips cut out of the wood. The tree's inhabitants are twittering owls and self-important lizards, who have made their homes in and among its branches and roots.

These small bits of information present an Indian landscape which is vivid, distinctively Indian and capable of evoking a whole gamut of emotional responses. The reader is given sharply defined bits of information that only an observer thoroughly familiar with the area might know. That for centuries pilgrims should have pitched stones

off the road as they passed by and still not made an appreciable difference in its rockiness gives us a measure of its appearance and of its rigorousness for the traveller. And one can imagine that as these pilgrims passed the small grove of dead trees they would have stopped to gather wood for later use. With such a surrounding, one can also understand why the shepherd boys throw stones at the evil-looking lizards that creep out into the sun. Taylor's banyan tree is a far cry from the vague trees that inhabit Moore's Indian landscape, and more overtly a part of Indian life.

It is interesting to note that Taylor's description proceeds downwards from sky to earth. He begins with the rain, moves down through the village, and ends finally with a view of the village outskirts. In striking contrast, E.M. Forster's description of Chandrapore in the first chapter of his 1924 work, A Passage to India, works in the opposite direction: Forster begins by describing the Ganges river which skirts the border of the town of Chandrapore, the main setting of the work, then moves on through the lower and upper sections of the village, eventually ending with a view of the sky over Chandrapore. Forster also links the movement upwards through the town with a corresponding rise in class and race status. The lower sections of the town are specifically occupied by Indians. Further inland one finds the houses of the Eurasians, and finally one reaches the upper levels of the Civil Station, where dwell the Anglo-Indians. Beyond that there is only sky, "which settles everything - not only climates and seasons, but when the earth shall be beautiful."⁹³

Forster's landscapes are used symbolically to reflect the divisive elements in Indian and European relations. Not only do we see this division in the initial description of Chandrapore, we also view it in the Marabar caves. The echo of the Marabar caves, for example, ultimately exposes the divisions between British and Indian communities. Adela's disorientation in the caves, brought on by the mysterious "Ou-Boom" echo, and the subsequent uproar caused when this disorientation leads on to the trial of Aziz for assault and rape, clearly show how Forster weaves his thematic concerns around landscape. As Robert Langbaum points out, Forster presents India as a place of muddles, not of romance. "India," he writes, "in its social and historical muddle and in its formless landscape, is developed as a powerful symbol of unknowable reality."⁹⁴

Ultimately the unknowable India defeats all, as we see at the end of the work, where Aziz and Fielding's attempts at reconciliation are frustrated by the very land itself:

But the horses didn't want it -they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there.'⁹⁵

The representations of India in the works of Taylor, Kipling, and Forster are patently different from those seen in the works of their predecessors. For the most part, the writers who preceded Taylor had little direct experience of India. Taylor, Kipling and Forster, on the other hand, could claim having "experienced" India. And their presentations of India make use of this direct experience accordingly. Yet the landscapes of Taylor, Kipling, and Forster

reflect different appreciations of India, and exemplify differences in views of the Empire, and of Britain's role in India. Taylor's works display little self-doubt concerning empire, or the role of the British in India. His British heroes are self-confident, skilled in their work and capable of surviving whatever perils they encounter. Their knowledge of India and its people are central to their success, and Taylor wastes few opportunities in underlining how this knowledge enables his protagonists to overcome whatever obstacles lie in their path. His message is that India, its landscape and its people, are easily dealt with once one knows how. But this knowledge is best gained and complemented by a respect for India and its people.

In Kipling's writing, India has become more alien and dangerous, a thing which is difficult to understand and master. A common theme in Kipling's writing is the constant struggle and challenge facing those who seek to rule India. The obstacles in the way of the British imperialist ruler are not solely the alien peoples and attitudes encountered. India itself, the "great, grey formless India", proves a constant opponent. The weather, and the rugged and dry terrain of the plains, are often as not presented in Kipling's stories as major tests of the quality of the imperialist, something to be conquered if the Anglo-Indian is to survive at his post. Those who don't, die quickly, like Hummil the assistant engineer in "At the End of the Passage." Hummil, unable to cope with his stifling surroundings, formed of "neither sky, sun, nor horizon, -nothing but a brown purple haze of heat," dies fighting with "the Fear," in a dark place somewhere in his dreams.⁹⁶

Forster's depiction of India is less confident and easy to decipher than either Taylor's or Kipling's. Taylor confidently seizes and manipulates the landscapes to suit his purposes. Kipling finds it more colourless and uncertain, paralleling his uncertainty about the ultimate Imperial victory. But Forster finds only ambiguity in landscape and in the Imperial mission. The difference is best summed up by Bonamy Dobree's comments on the "New School" of writers emerging after the First World War, of whom Forster was part. Dobree notes that this new school does not make statements but asks questions: "It does not say, 'This is what life is like', but rather, 'Is life really like this?'"⁹⁷ In the end, Forster implies, India defies description.

Notes

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2. Christopher Marlowe, The Complete Plays, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986, 109.
3. Ibid., 268.
4. Ibid., 67.
5. M.H. Abrams, et.al. ed., The Norton Anthology of Poetry, vol. 1, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962, 771.
6. Keith Walker, ed., John Dryden (The Oxford Authors) Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 32.
7. Ibid., 70
8. Lach & Foss, op. cit., 25.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. For a discussion of the use of these sources in "Kubla Khan" see John Livingston Lowes, The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination, 2nd rev. ed., London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1951, p. 356-64 and 384-87.]
12. J. J. Saunders, "A Short Lived Revival," in Romanticism: Problems of Definition, Explanation, and Evaluation, John Halsted, ed., Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1965, 1.
13. Weill, quoted in J.J. Saunders, op. cit., 3.
14. Saunders, 3.
15. Victor R. Savage, Western Impressions of Nature and Landscape in Southeast Asia, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1984, 23.
16. Maurice Fitzgerald, ed., Poems of Robert Southey, London: Oxford University Press, 1909, 126.
17. Ibid., 127.
18. Ibid., 149.
19. For a discussion of this theme, see Drew's India and the Romantic Imagination, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, 236-40.

20. Thomas Moore, Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance, London: George Routledge & Sons, 1868, 9-10.
21. Ibid., 128.
22. Bhupal Singh, A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, 32.
23. Udayon Misra, The Raj in Fiction, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1987, 46.
24. Peter Mudford, Birds of a Different Plumage: A Study of British-Indian Relations from Akbar to Curzon, London: William Collins, Sons & Co., Ltd., 1974, 36.
25. Kenneth Allott, introduction to W. D. Arnold's Oakfield, or Fellowship in the East, Surrey: Leicester University Press, 1973, 30.
26. Arnold, Oakfield, vol. II, 24.
27. Peter Keating, ed., Into Unknown England, 1866-1913, Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Co., Ltd., 1976, 11.
28. Michael Hiley, Victorian Working Women: Portraits from Life, London: Gordon Fraser, 1979, 17.
29. Keating, Into Unknown England, 15.
30. Edward Said, Orientalism, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987, 43.
31. Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1963, 343.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 341.
35. Frederick Page, ed., The Poems of Coventry Patmore, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949, 69.
36. Ibid., 190.
36. Ibid., 154.
38. Elizabeth Starling, Noble Deeds of Woman: Or, Examples of Female Courage and Virtue, 6th ed., London: Henry G. Bohn, 1859, iii-iv.
39. Ibid., iv.
40. Ibid.

41. Jenni Calder, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction, London: Thames & Hudson, 1976, 14.
42. P.M. Taylor, Tara -A Mahratta Tale, 3d ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879, 4.
43. P.M. Taylor, Ralph Darnell, 2nd ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879, 442.
44. Ibid., 443.
45. P.M. Taylor, Seeta, 3d ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879, 26.
46. Ibid., 50.
47. Leonore Davidoff, et. al., "Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society", in The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Mitchell, Juliet & Ann Oakley, eds., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976, 154-5.
48. Seeta, 26.
49. Hiley, 29.
50. G.R. Drysdale, quoted in Houghton, 381.
51. Houghton, 382.
52. Leonard Woolf, Growing, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961, 17.
53. Philip Meadows Taylor, The Story of My Life, 2nd ed., Edinburgh & London, William Blackwood & Co., 1878, 63.
54. Ibid.
55. Dennis Kincaid, British Social Life in India, 1608-1937, 2nd edition, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972, 63.
56. Local Indian dignitaries often sponsored nautches for the pleasure of the British traders, who were entertained by the pleasing and sensual movements of the professional dancing girls engaged specially for the occasion. No doubt such sights excited the British imagination into believing and reporting stories in the 1700's of sects called "Molacks who observe heathenish customs. They have a yearly Feast, but the time of its celebration is only known to themselves, wherein, after much Mirth and Jollity, each Sex withdraws to a Room. The women take each a Handkerchief and go in the dark promiscuously among the Men." (Hamilton, New Account of the East Indies, quoted in Kincaid, p. 16-17.) The initial interest of the British in nautches as titillating if libidinous examples of Indian culture later turned into feelings of boredom and disgust. In 1864 one could find the esteemed historian Sir George Otto Trevelyan

declaring, in The Competition Wallah, "I could not have believed in the existence of an entertainment so extravagantly dull as a Nautch."

57. Kincaid, 43.
58. Ibid, 58.
59. Public Despatches to Madras MD 6-4-1687, para. 8, quoted in Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980, 96.
60. Ronald Hyam, Britain's Imperial Century, 1851-1914, London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1976, 37.
61. Ibid., 38.
62. Walter Bagehot, Physics and Politics, Boston: Beacon Press, 1956, 87-88.
63. George Otto Trevelyan, The Competition Wallah, London: Macmillan & Co., 1864, 255.
64. Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971, 178.
65. Those interested in learning more about the development of the Indian Army should consult the text and bibliography of Philip Mason's A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers and Men, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1974, and the paperback edition published by Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
66. Trevelyan, 357.
67. Harold Isaacs, Images of Asia: American Views of China and India, New York: Harper & Row, 1972, 262.
68. Among the most prominent of the British reformers concerned about morality in India was Alfred Dyer, a Quaker who was a partner in the England based religious publishers Dyer Brothers, and whose articles in his weekly journal Sentinel argued against such things as smoking and drinking. His investigations in 1886 into the official sanctioning and regulation of prostitution camps set up near army barracks in Lucknow, Bareilly, sections of Oudh and other areas of India led in part to the House of Commons resolution in 1888 to ban the examination, licensing, and monitoring of prostitutes in India, and to prohibit official involvement in such matters, in effect repealing the Indian Contagious Diseases Act, passed in 1868 in order to combat the pandemic spread of venereal diseases in the army's lower ranks. (For more on the subject see Kenneth Ballhatchet's Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj.)

Among Indian reformers the most prominent was Venkata

Ratnam Naidu in Calcutta, who led campaigns in the late nineteenth century against a variety of Indian practices, including watching nautch dancers and admiring 'indecent pictures'. (Ballhatchet, 157.)

69. V.G. Kiernan, The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes Towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972, 38.
70. A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1954, 481.
71. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century, there were many cases of officers appealing to the Chief Commissioner of Burma against refusals of promotion on the grounds of their having Burmese mistresses or wives. In 1895 Sir Frederick Fryer, the new Chief Commissioner, attempted to have two officials transferred to India because they had married Burmese women. The appeal was rejected but the problem of how to deal with such cases continued to plague the ruling hierarchy, which sought to maintain the high standard required of a ruling class that had justified its presence in Asia throughout the nineteenth century by claiming a cultural and moral superiority over the native populace. (See Ballhatchet, 145-157.)
72. Philip Meadows Taylor, The Story of My Life, 2nd ed., Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1878, 35.
73. Taylor, The Story of My Life, ed. by Henry Bruce, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920, 43.
74. Rudyard Kipling, Plain Tales from the Hills Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987, 162.
75. Philip Meadows Taylor, "Legends of the Dekhan: The Fatal Armlet," The Keepsake, 1841, 23.
76. Ibid.
77. Philip Meadows Taylor, Confessions of a Thug, 2nd ed., London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1840, vol. 1, 269.
78. Meadows Taylor, Story of My Life, 2nd ed., 19.
79. Meadows Taylor, Confessions of a Thug, vol. 2, 3.
80. Ibid., 6.
81. Ibid., 8.
82. T.O.D. Dunn, "Meadows Taylor, His Autobiography and Novels," Calcutta Review, 291 (Jan 1918), 27.

83. Philip Meadows Taylor, Tippoo Sultaun: A Tale of the Mysore War, 2nd ed., London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880, 5.
84. Ibid., 6.
85. Ibid., 7.
86. Ibid., 7.
87. Kipling, Plain Tales from the Hills, 68.
88. Ibid., 70.
89. Ibid., 72.
90. Ibid., 70.
91. (Philip Meadows Taylor), "Letters from Egypt 1863-65," Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country, 72.481 (Nov 1865), 580.
92. Meadows Taylor, Tara, 402. Further references to the works are noted in brackets in the text.
93. E.M. Forster, A Passage to India, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985, 32.
94. Robert Langbaum, "A New Look at E. M. Forster," Southern Review, 4.1 (Jan 1968), 44.
95. Forster, A Passage to India, 316.
96. Rudyard Kipling, Life's Handicap, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 138; 155-56.
97. Bonamy Dobree, The Lamp and the Lute, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929, 67.

APPENDIX: TAYLOR'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH BLACKWOOD, 1839-1876

[These letters are from the Blackwood Papers, housed in the National Library of Scotland. They provide useful information concerning the publication of Tara, Ralph Darnell, and Taylor's autobiography, The Story of My Life. All letters by Philip Meadows Taylor are, except where noted, written from his residence at Old Court, Harolds Cross, Dublin.]

1839

[Ms. 4049, ff. 208-209]

141 Strand

25th May 1839

Captain Meadows Taylor would feel extremely obliged to Mr. Blackwood, if he could inform him whether the Indian legend he left with Professor Wilson when he was in Edinburgh has been accepted for the Magazine. From a message the Professor was kind enough to send through Mr. Dunsmure, Captain T. concluded it would be, but he is quite uncertain upon the subject.

If the legend has not been accepted, Captain Taylor would feel greatly obliged if Mr. Blackwood would forward it to London directed

Captain Taylor

17 Alfred Place

Bedford Square

At the same time he is in some hope that its fate may be a more fortunate one.

[Note: The piece in question was most probably "Legends of the Dekhan: The Fatal Armlet". It was eventually published in 1840 in The Keepsake.]

1861

[Ms. 4165, F. 1]

Near Dublin

30 Dec. 1861

Gentlemen

I shall be much obliged if you will be so good as inform me whether it will suit your purpose to publish a work of fiction, the scene of which is in India, & illustrative of Native manners and customs -in your magazine. A portion of the Tale is written, and I should be happy to send you some introductory chapters if you wish to see them. The work, if completed, would not exceed three volumes part.

I am gentlemen

faithfully yours

Meadows Taylor

Author of Confessions of a Thug

1863

[Ms. 4186, ff. 90-91]

26 March 1863

Dear Sirs

I have very nearly finished a work of fiction in three volumes the scene of which is laid in India. It will probably be completed next

week.

The tale is illustrative of the people and of a celebrated and remarkable period in the history of the Mahratta country, and I should be glad to know whether you would like to have the consideration of it, either with a view to independent publication, or as a serial in your Magazine.

There is no European element whatsoever in the story which, like a former work by me The Confessions of a Thug, belongs to the people of India Hindus and Mahomedans only. My life has been almost exclusively passed among them since that book was written, but perhaps without matured experience, and during this period, no one, that I am aware of, has ventured into the field which was then exclusively my own.

A question arise however, is the History of India worth illustrating by means of works of fiction?

It is curious enough that three very remarkable epochs occurred in three successive centuries nearly at the same period-

1st-1657. The rise of the Mahratta power under Sivajee, and the beginning of Mahomedan decadence of which my present tale is the subject.

2nd-1757 (June). The rise of English power and Lord Clive's victory at Plassey.

3d- 1857 (June). The Mutiny and attempt to overthrow the English power in India.

All these events abound with dramatic effects and situations, and the first was selected with a view of continuing the two last in succession if it succeeded.

I am no judge of course of the probability of success of this work: but I consider it better than anything I have hitherto attempted. One of the influential London critics has seen a portion of the M.S. of the 1st volume, and from that, & a synopsis of all, considered the book would have a great success because of the entirely new material, of which it is composed, and I can get an opinion of it from the Reviewer if you wish for me.

A reply at your earliest convenience will much oblige.

Dear sirs

Yours faithfully

Meadows Taylor (Col.)

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D4, p. 370]

Edinburgh April 1, 1863

Dear Sir

We fear that your Indian novel without any European element will be almost too strange in its materials to prove interesting to the general reader for a series of parts in our magazine -we feel obliged by your proposition & if you send us the M.S. we will as soon as we can get it examined & let you know whether we are disposed to undertake the publication either as a separate novel or as a series in the Magazine. We shall be very glad indeed if we can give a favourable reply & remain

yrs faithfully

Wm. Blackwood & Sons

Col. Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, f. 96]

April 2, 1863

Dear Sirs

I am much obliged by your note of yesterday.

It is of course an experiment as to whether a purely Indian tale would be acceptable to the public or not, and I have been so long silent, that I am as it were, a new candidate for literary honours, that I may perhaps be allowed to remind you that Moriers and Frasers Persian Stories still rank as standard works of fiction and were eminently successful when published, and that nothing of purely Indian character has been attempted since my own works The Confessions of a Thug & Tippoo Sultaun -which, I can say with truth, were as successful as I could have desired.

My present story though literally correct as to historical facts, real scenery and characters, is more ideal than anything I have attempted before, and therefore, perhaps, has a better chance of present success. Of this however, you will be a far better judge than I am, and I shall be happy to submit the whole of the M.S. or portions of it to you -as you may wish.

The MS. of Vol. I is now in London. That of Vols. II & III with me: and two, or at least three chapters are required for the completion of Vol. III. Pray therefore be so good as inform me how much I am to send you, and how. If you wish the M.S. of Vol. I to be made over to your agency in London, I will send instructions for it to be sent without loss of time.

It will give me very sincere pleasure if the publication of this work either in the Magazine or later should be compatible with our mutual interests.

I remain dear sirs
yours faithfully
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 92-93]

6th April 1863

Dear Sirs

I have just written to London to request that the M.S. of the 1st volume of Tara may be sent to your house, & I trust you will receive it safely. With the M.S. was a synopsis of the work which I drew up for the information of the friend to whom I lent it to read. As to whether you will find it with the M.S. or not I cannot say. If not and you wish for me, I could send it.

You have not however mentioned whether you would like the 2nd & 3d Vols. of the M.S. dispatched to you -or portions of them. Pray be so good as advise me about this, as if portions will answer. I could select some chapters of each volume which, while enabling you to follow the story, would perhaps answer better than my synopsis.

Pray remember that the M.S. would have to undergo careful referring before it went to press. Each chapter would be examined critically. What you will see, is literally as it was written cimento calamo. It may possibly also be too long and require pruning into "regulation" size. But when I had finished the 1st vol. I calculated as well as I could that it would print about equal to a volume of Mr. Thackerays Philip which I happened to be reading.

You flatter me by referring to the Thug. Which, I will hope he did not disturb your nights rest. It has had three editions and is now out of print. I trust it has amused you.

Believe me
yours faithfully
Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood & Sons

[Ms. 4186, ff. 94-95]

8th April 1863

Dear Sirs

I quite forgot to mention on last writing to you that the 1st volume would require an introductory chapter explaining briefly the historical period of the Tale, and discussing the City of Beejapoor where part of the scene is laid, etc. This I would write whenever required.

If you are at all curious about the actual history of the period I beg to refer you to Grant Duffs History of the Mahrattas -Vol. I.

Tooljapoor where the story opens is a town in a district of which I was the Civil Commissioner for several years. It is 24 miles north of Sholapoor. There is a very holy and picturesque temple of Bhowani there which is one of the great places of Indian pilgrimage, and the town was a very favourite resort of mine in all seasons.

The whole of the country described I know perfectly, and I state this as a guarantee to you that there is nothing ideal in the descriptions. They are as literally true as I could sketch them.

Believe me

yours faithfully

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 98-99]

19th April 1863

Dear Sirs

My friend was unavoidably prevented from sending the M.S. to you when I wrote to him & therefore I was not anxious: but I am nevertheless obliged to you for your kindness in writing on the receipt of it.

Pray take your own time in considering the M.S. I can send you all, or any further portions you may wish to see, as you may require them: but if I may make a request in that you will read the concluding chapters and know my conclusion before you make your own: for what you have will hardly give you an idea how the end is worked out.

You will find no horrors in this book like the Thugs, and I have only one murder and no bigamy which seems to suit the prohibists just now so much. You are quite right about the Thug, it was better as it was separate, with its honours of three editions. I have not forgotten a long & pleasant talk on it with your Professor Wilson soon after it came out & when I happened to be in Edinburgh. He then proposed a story for the Magazine but I had made other engagements & it was all I could do to fulfil them while I staid (sic) in England on leave, else I might have been on your staff perhaps "long ago."

Believe me

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

Messrs Blackwood and Sons

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D4, p. 383-384]

Edinburgh May 2 1863

Dear Sir

I have read the M.S. of your first volume and altho I admire it very much I feel very doubtful as to how it will take & for the magazine certainly I would not attempt it.

The descriptions are good & the incidents striking & vividly told but I fear that there is for the English reader a fatal want of human interest about the characters. The summary of the whole book arrived

the other day and I read it also. -I grudge that Balmat Rae who is I think your best character does not kill the savage Moolray. Isn't there a flavour of Ivanhoe in the paying of the money to the Lallah & about some of the speeches at Arms.

There is certainly a disadvantage in judging from the M.S. as the hand is sometimes difficult and the changing scenes & strange names make a difficulty in following the connections, but I feel so doubtful as to what we could venture to offer that if you have any fair prospect with the London publishers of the History of the Thug I would rather that you went to him than run the risk of further delay with me. You mentioned however that you wished me particularly not to come to any decision until I had seen the whole of the work so I leave it open. I am however so doubtful as to how the Tale will take that if you look to any considerable sum for it I would rather that you tried London.

Your visit here must have been in the time of my elder brother but if you come again I hope you will give me an opportunity of making your personal acquaintance.

I wish I could give a more decidedly favourable reply about your M.S. as from your letters & character it would give me much pleasure to enter upon literary relations with you.

believe me etc.

(signed) John Blackwood

Col. Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 100-103]

May 5, 1863

Dear Sir

I have well considered the purport of your letter of the 2d for which I am sincerely obliged, and wish so much that you should have the fullest consideration of Tara, that in order to enable you to judge it better, I think, than from the first volume only -I shall send you the concluding chapter by book post. You have the original synopsis which, though by no means exactly followed, will serve to enable you to fill up the intermediate portions.

I thank you very much for the favorable opinion you give of what you have seen of the work. The difficulties which lay in the path of its acceptance or publication, I think I intimated in my first note, and am fully aware of it and yet -I do not despair. I cannot, it is true, invest the Tale with modern interest -but I think my people would be found at least human: not very unlike ourselves perhaps in display of passions, and yet sufficiently strange from differences of creed and race, to admit of a new phase of illustrative fiction.

You will see by the conclusion how Moro Trimmul is killed, and in this aspect the Synopsis is altered: but I cannot make Bulwunt Rao kill Maloosray -nor can I kill him at all. He is an historical character and after acting a great part in the history of his rough times, was killed at the storm of Singurh, near Poona. His life is a romance in itself, and the theme of many a Mahratta Ballad.

My handwriting is very crabbed I know, and this always speaks to the disadvantage of the M.S. but printers soon become accustomed to it, and the proper names in Tara are not worse than those in the Thug and would not distress anyone in print -at least I hope not. -I am puzzled by your reference to Ivanhoe. I have not read the Tale since I was a boy but I remember no payment of money.- The Jew is to be tortured certainly: but my friend the Lalla's scene with Pahar Singh surely does not resemble that in the Dungeon of Torgnilstone so I do not fear the critics on this point.

I was in Edinburgh in I think 1839-40 staying with Mr. Dunsmure whose eldest daughter, my uncle Admiral (Castle of) Mitford of Hunmanby Hall had married. My uncle Mr. Selby of Twizell introduced me to Professor Wilson, who was then, I think, editor of *Maga*. I am not sure on this point, but when discussing the *Thug*, which was the sensation book of the season Mr. Wilson goodnaturedly asked me to begin a story -of the historical- for *Maga*: but I was then engaged on another story for Mr. Bentley and had no spare time. When I returned to India, I began *Tara* for him, but fell into political and (missing piece) with the charge of large provinces which rendered it impossible to resume literary work at all, till I came home for good. I did not, to my knowledge, make the acquaintance of your brother when in Edinburgh -but I shall certainly do myself the pleasure of introducing myself to you should I ever return to your city.

I thank you sincerely for your kind wishes in regard to a literary connection. I can only assure you that it is heartily reciprocated, so much so indeed, that I hope you will forgive my seeming pertinaciously about *Tara*, and if that work will not answer, perhaps something else may be struck out for *Maga* occasionally. Are Indian subjects to be tabooed? I think and find that people at home want familiar knowledge of the natives and the country and that learned essays delightful though they may be as Mr. Patersons, can only be endured by one class of students -I find people here entertained by familiar matters about India in the simple lectures I occasionally give here as an amateur, and the reason why the shoemakers son could not propose to the carpenters daughter, though involving the highest principles of caste discussion, seemed to be perfectly intelligible even to my lady auditors. I have a sketch "A Day in Cacherry," written for my daughters: would you like to see it? It is the actual record of one days work, and the (piece missing) connected with it in my camp and in the Cacherry, and they are very fond of it. Many other sketches could be written...Tales of Indian Festivals "village kinds" and so forth. & I have so lived among the people, that I may say without vanity that I am perhaps the only person who could write them.

But to revert to *Tara*. I enclose herewith the opinion of, as I think, one of the very ablest, and most delightful writers among the London critics -one who now reviews books, as I may mention to you, for the *Morning Post*. All the literary articles there, of any pretension or importance, are from that pen: and you will remember reviews of *Silas Marner*, the *Mill on the Floss*, *Lady Audley* -*Aurora Floyd* and will have read I daresay hosts of beautiful and most original articles which have emanated from the same pen. I know the opinion give of *Tara*, to be so honest that were I a thousand times more a friend than I am, I should have had an unfavourable judgement of the work if the writer had thought it deserved one. I cannot tell the name of this writer for reasons which you will appreciate.

I confess to you that I do expect a fair "Market Price" for *Tara*, but and because I have been so long absent from the literary stage - would be content, after the first sum should be agreed upon, to make the success of the work an element of further remuneration.- I cannot take it upon myself to state what those terms should be, and would rather that you offered what you considered the book to be worth. Mr. Bentley & I have parted company amicably at last, and though there are many houses in London to which I could address myself, I could not do so while your consideration of *Tara* was incomplete.

If you should after all prefer my offering the book in London, I could still do so, giving you the option of a refusal if you wish it,

and should this be the case, pray be so kind as forward all the M.S. addressed to me, & sealed to my agents Messrs Smith Elder & Co. Ltd., to be left till called for.

I am really ashamed of the length of this letter, & beg you to excuse it & believe me

My dear sir

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

the portion I send you

I have read your M.S. twice through with the closest attention, and I congratulate you on the style in which you have brought your task to a conclusion. It is simply a piece of workmanship of finished excellence. You have preserved admirably the relative proportion of the historical and fictitious interest of the story, and in the scenes of the murder of Afzool Khan, and the temple scene between Gunga & Tara -have attained a high degree of picturesqueness and power.

The conclusion is most effective -especially Taras lingering love for her early faith, and the intimation of a dawning knowledge of Christianity in her mind. This amplification -without any over straining of the point, rather indicating the development of a noble spiritual philosophy towards the point where that philosophy and revelation converge is a fine idea -most artistically executed.

The successful intrigues of Sivajee are placed in a light which must elucidate the history of Indian political vicissitudes to the leader desirous of understanding a subject which is normally the driest and least interesting of reading and your illustrations of the religious and social systems of Hindu and Mahomedan races blended with the romance of the individual histories which you narrate, give to the lives, the motives and the destinies of those strange and distant people a reality with which they have never before been invested to the English public.

You have selected a period of Indian history almost unknown and made it perfectly familiar. We have no knowledge of India until it had fallen or was in process of falling under British rule. "Tara" takes us back to a period when the history of the ancient land was integral, and it does for Hindustan what "Harold" does for England, what the "Romances of the Rose" does for the Norman race, with the added value and interest of supplying a point of intermediate contact with the pictures of Indian civilization and the development of our own policy. -If I might venture to advise, I should recommend you forwarding the conclusive chapters to any publisher at present engaged in considering the book, as they contain the gist of its interest and value: and, taken in context with the first volume will afford a sufficient view of the whole. Believe me,

yours sincerely

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D4, p. 399]

Edinburgh May 26 1863

Dear Sir

I have been so much occupied that I have not been able to read the last portion of M.S. that you sent with the requisite leisure for judging of any M.S. but I have looked into it. My impression still remains that the aspect of human life presented in Tara is so unfamiliar to the ordinary English reader that it must appear unnatural & that this precludes the chance of a large sale so if you

look to that I would rather that you tried another publisher. There is great merit in the story and I have no doubt the picture of the country and manners at the time is excellent. If the following proposition meets your ideas I am willing to undertake the publication. For an edition of one thousand copies (1000) we will pay you (£300) three hundred pounds, and £50 more when the edition is sold out. For any number printed & sold beyond the first edition in the same form that is a 1/11/6 novel we will pay you at the rate of £200 for every 500. I am going to London tomorrow but address here as my nephew & partner will attend to any instructions you may send. My London address is 4 Burlington Gardens.

My allusion to Ivanhoe was in regard to the scene where the robber chief doles out the pittance to Lall Sing as resembling the famous scene where Old Isaac of York pockets the full weighted zechines instead of giving them to Garth.

I am dear sir

yours very truly

John Blackwood

Col. Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4728, f. 3]

28th May [1863]

Dear Sir

I am much obliged by your letter of the 26th which I received last night.

I must beg a few days delay before I reply definitely to your proposal which shall have my best consideration and I will write to you again as soon as possible.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 106-108]

Summer Grove

N. Whitehaven

June 6th 1863

Dear Sir

I ought not to have delayed writing so long to you about the book, but I have been on a tour on the Lakes with some friends, and have been more busy with the trout, than with my pen. Now however that I have returned, I cannot delay a post in answering your letter of the 26th May and I hope you will kindly excuse my silence.

With regards to Tara, I can only say that I very gladly put myself into your hands and most sincerely trust for both our sakes that 'she' may be entirely successful. All I can say is that if the result should be so, could I expect any advance on your offer? Say £400 on the sale of the whole of the first edition and £500 on the sale of the whole of the second? By your own offer, I may get 350 on the sale of the first and 400 on the sale of all the second, so that my own proposition is more; but in this respect I leave myself entirely in your hands, and accept what you have proposed, which is as follows

"For an edition of one thousand copies (1000) we will pay you (£300) three hundred pounds & £50 more when the edition is sold out.

"For any number printed and sold beyond the first edition in the same form that is as £1.11.6 novel we will pay you at the rate of £200 for every 500.

I will look over the scene you allude to between the robber chief and the Lallah, and compare it with the scene in Ivanhoe, and will alter it if there is any real resemblance but I don't think there is.

May I beg one favour in relation to the printing. My former books were printed by my cousin Mr. John Edward Taylor, and if this might be put into his hands, I should be very thankful. I believe there would be no difference in the expence (sic) of work in his hands or any other printers, but that is a point on which he himself would satisfy you. I know only that his work is very good, and that I should have the benefit of a most critical reader who does not mind sharp criticism if he detects any looseness of expression, or inelegance which, even in a revision of the M.S. might escape me. In short that I should have the benefit of very mature experience, and of one very anxious to reestablish my literary position.

I can do no more than propose this, and leave it for your consideration and I write to my cousin to wait upon you and make any arrangements you wish.

I also write to Edinburgh for the M.S. to be sent to me, as I should like to revise it all before I send it to press.

Believe me

dear sir

very faithfully yours

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 104-105

Summer Grove

near Whitehaven

June 6th 1863

Dear Sir

I beg to inform you that I have accepted Mr. Blackwoods offer for 'Tara' as conveyed in his letter of 25th May, and have written to this effect to him at his London address, no. 12 Burlington Gardens.

It will remain with him to make arrangements about the printing of the work: but before it goes to press it must undergo careful revisions, and I therefore beg of you to be so good as return the manuscript to me by the Globe Parcels Express, which I think has an agency in Edinburgh or by any other safe conveyance. I shall be at home again I think on Thursday morning next, and as soon as I receive the M.S. will begin the work of revision.

Will you therefore kindly inform me to whom I am to send 'copy' and when. I have proposed to Mr. John Blackwood that my cousin Mr. John Edward Taylor should print the work, but on this point he will be the best judge.

Yours very faithfully

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4728, ff. 5-6]

Summer Grove

W. Whitehaven

10th June [1863]

Dear Sir

I am much obliged to you for forwarding the M.S. of Tara and having done so I shall find it at home on my arrival tomorrow morning.

I was not aware that you printed your own publications and suggested Mr. J.E. Taylor should print it, as I was certain of his

assistance. It was only a suggestion, however, made to Mr. John Blackwood to be considered in case it suited his convenience and interest, and I hope he will think of it in no other light.

I cast up the M.S. of Vol. I as well as I could, and at 30 lines to a page, I found it almost exactly corresponds with the 1st volume of Mr. Thackerays "Philip" which I was then reading. I have not tried the 2d or 3d volume, but if the M.S. is too long, which it may be, I will make such reductions in parts which can best bear them, as will bring the work within the limits you may prescribe, as nearly as possible.

Will you kindly advise me on this limit, when you tell me to whom I need to send the M.S. as revised; but I think 30 lines to a page, and about 320 pages to a volume would answer my purposes very well if it suits yours.

There should I think be a short introductory chapter illustrative of the History of Beejapoor and descriptive of the city and its noble remains as they are at present and this I will write so as to be sent with the first chapters.

Believe me

Yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

P.S. Old Court 11 June

In the hurry of leaving yesterday, this was forgotten. The M.S. has not arrived yet but will doubtless make its appearance in time.

[Acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 403]

4 Burlington Gardens

London

June 11, 1863

Dear Sir

I have been prevented from replying to your note sooner by engagements out of town.

If our editions of a thousand copies of Tara went off quickly I would with pleasure make the payment in addition to my offer which you suggest but such a sale is I fear too much to hope for.

In making the proposition that Mr. Taylor should print the book I daresay you were unaware that we ourselves are printers and normally look to printing our own books.

If however you care much about it I am willing that Mr. Taylor should print Tara provided his terms are about what ours would be and that he can keep the type standing.

Part of my plan was to keep the whole book in type so that if the sale went beyond the thousand we could print only such numbers as seemed necessary to meet the demand and not have the expense of re-selling or the more serious risk of printing a larger second edition than might be required.

If after this explanation you wish Mr. Taylor to print the book will you ask him to call upon me at 37 Paternoster Row on Tuesday between 12 and one o'clock.

I should like to see him anyway to explain to him how happy I would have been to employ him had we not been printers, indeed as it is I shall be happy to oblige you.

I am etc.

(signed) JB

[Ms. 4728, ff. 7-8]

June 13th [1863]

Dear Sir

I have arrived at home the day before yesterday and your letter reached me from Summer Grove this morning. I cannot express to you how much I am gratified by it, and pray you to receive my very sincere thanks. All I can hope for with you is, that 'Tara' may take the public fancy and be a mutual source of profit and gratification to us.

I have written by this post to my cousin, and requested him to wait upon you about the printing of the book. This I feel to be so exclusively a professional subject that I must leave the arrangement of it entirely in your hands. I am quite sure that if you do agree upon it the work will be done well; but I cannot give you information on the very essential points you mention and in the present uncertainty of the month every precaution is most necessary which can secure your approval!

Your nephew from whom I heard when at Summer Grove told me that you are printers as well as publishers, and had I known this, I should not have ventured to make the proposal: I replied to him, as I do to you, that I leave the matter entirely in your hands, being convinced that you will act as you think best. My only reason for proposing my cousin was that he is used to my occasional roughnesses of expression in writing, and that we fight them out amiably. While he does not spare me if he can detect any. I have not yet received the M.S. but will begin revision of it as soon as it comes. Please instruct me -(whoever prints the book.) as to quantity etc. Mr. Thackeray's "Philip," is 30 lines to a page & I think about 9 words to a line. 270 words, and when I cast up the 1st vol. of Tara, it seemed much the same as the 1st vol. of Philip. Would this do? If so I will keep myself to these dimensions, and reduce, by casting out passages here and there

[MS. 4186, ff. 60. remainder of above letter]
where they may be necessary, yet so as not to interfere with any thing material.

I have written to another cousin Mr. H.S. Reeve, who is editor of the Edinburgh Review, to ask him whether it would be possible to dedicate the work to the Queen as the first introduction of Indian historical romance. Long ago when the Thug was going through the press, it was sent to her in sheets as printed, & she may not have forgotten me. Should you approve of such a dedication if it be possible.

You may wish to know what sort of person is writing to you, and I enclose a photograph, hoping that it may be the precursor of the blossom of a personal acquaintance.

Believe me

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq

[Ms. 4186, ff. 109-110]

17th June 1863

Dear Sir

I send just a line to inform you that I have received the M.S. of Tara from the Glasgow Steamer and shall await your instructions as to the printing.

But I may as well ask whether any of the M.S. was cast up in your office, and what you made of it as to quantity. Here is the result I have come to on the first volume of MS.

268 pages

32 lines to a page average

8576 lines

10 ½ words to a line average

90,048 lines

then 90,048 words to a line ÷ 9 words to a line = lines/10005 ÷ 30
lines to a page = 333 pages for Vol. I.

Will this do?

I do not think there is much difference in the amount of writing
in the pages, but I can take occasional checks as I go on.

Believe me

yours faithfully

Meadows Taylor

[note on top f. 109]

Answered that we did not set up any of the M.S. His own calc as
to extent having struck us as quite clear, & that it will do very
well -have asked him to send letters for announcement in Maga & will
let him know about printing after hearing from you.

WB June 19/63

[Ms. 4186, ff. 111]

June 20th 1863

Dear Sir

I do not delay a post in replying to your note of yesterday.

I am glad to hear that my calculation of M.S. was correct. I
don't think there was any material error, as I took the average of
100 lines for words, and 100 pages for lines at random through the
1st volume; and I will adhere to this through the whole book as
nearly as possible.

You would perhaps be a better judge of a title than I am. But I
shall answer on the other side what appears to me most appropriate,
and leave you to take your choice. I do not care about my military
rank and would rather fall back upon my old authorship. I take the
M.R.I.A. which Academy here were pleased to confer upon me the other
day as a compliment, the only one I cant return to them.

I had a letter from my cousin who says he has seen your uncle, but
thought they should not agree about the printing, and I had written
to him that I could not think of making a point of it. -So whenever
you tell me, when, & where, to send copy, I will do so.

By the bye, should there be a glossary & notes? Separate, or as
footnotes? & to each chapter where necessary. Please advise me.
Notes and explanations of words are here & there necessary, to
explain the text. Believe me

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

William Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4728, ff. 20. remainder of above letter]

1) TARA

A Mahratta Tale. 1657

by Colonel Meadows Taylor MRJA

author of Confessions of a Thug

etc.

2) TARA

An Indian Romance. 1657

by M.T. etc. as above

3) TARA

A Tale of Beejapoor. 1657
by M.T. etc. as above

4) TARA

An Eastern Romance. 1657
by M.T. etc.

or anything else that you think will suit the public taste better.
MT

I think No. 1 or 3 better than 2 or 4 but perhaps you can devise something different from all & more artistic.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 112-113]

21st June 1863

My dear sir

I had a note from your Uncle this morning. It is decided that you print 'Tara,' as my cousin could not answer for being able to keep the type standing.

I am now only in doubt about the notes and should introduce them as sparingly as possible.

What do you say to this argument? 1st translations of mere interjections such as "Bismilla," (in God's name), Shabash (well done), etc. to be in footnotes.

2ndly any explanation of terms, or customs; or any explanatory matter, to be added at the end of each chapter -as better perhaps than in a glossary at the end of a volume. There would not be much in any case, but some explanations are necessary here & there.

Your uncle says he goes north in a day or two, so you may decide together on the title. I could not please myself about it yesterday. Would simply

- 'Tara' -

1657 by M.T. etc.

answer? Without any indications of locality?

If locality should be indicated, either of the two I proposed yesterday should be better than the others.

But really I feel that you know much more about "christening the baby" than I do, and so I leave her in your hands.

Please let me have a reply about the notes etc. at your earliest convenience as I will begin at once on the M.S. & will send the copy in penny parcels by book post, as fast as corrected.

Believe me

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

William Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 114-115]

June 27th 1863

My dear sir

I dispatched the first four chapters of Tara by yesterdays post having reperused them and altered what was necessary. They were originally two, but I thought it best to divide them so as to make them more readable.

I proposed to make very few notes, and such as are unavoidable can be inserted at the foot of each page as necessary. A glossary would be too pretentious I think at first, and I am happy to find you agree

with me on this point.

It is very satisfactory to me that your Uncle has arranged for my cousin to read the proof sheets, for he is so strict a reader that no inelegance escapes him and one does not always detect ones own faults.

I am only colonel by courtesy and in virtue of the pension I have as full colonel after 36 years service, so I do not exactly know whether I am warranted in assuming it in the title page of the book. If you decide however that there is no objection, let it stand. If not, dub me Captain as I was before.

I was very glad you took the first title suggested. It was that which I had written on the first page of the M.S. and which I have always thought simpler and best.

I will send you more M.S. today and continue a daily supply if possible. I should like the M.S. to accompany the proofs if there is no objection.

Believe me

Yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 116-117]

7th July 1863

My dear sir

I send by this post the last chapter XXVII of Vol. I of Tara. The total of the portions cut out, is 715 lines or 22 pages, and I have therefore replaced the original two concluding chapters of Vol. I - which had been transferred to Volume II.

I shall be curious to see how the printing agrees with the M.S. with a view to regulating the size of the 2d & 3d volumes, and also whether it agrees with my original calculation. I should think a few of the first sheets would determine this, and if there be too much, I may be able to reduce, without affecting the integrity of the tale.

I can continue sending copy if you please, but perhaps you have enough for the present. Will you be so good as let me know about this, for it is no trouble to me to send M.S. daily if you like, & in this matter I will do exactly as you choose.

(piece cut out)

I hope all the previous parcels of M.S. have reached you safely.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 118-119]

July 8th 1863

My dear sir

Many thanks for your note. I am so much gratified that you like what you have read of Tara, & hope the interest will increase!

I shall want revises, & send back 3 sheets today the rest tomorrow, & will send more copy for your work is very rapid. I will send one revise to my cousin, but not proofs. It wd be no use and wd only delay. Just his token one revise just to prove whether he can find any holes in my coat.

In great haste

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

My best compliments to your uncle if you please.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 120-121]

July 10 1863

My dear sir

The parcel of M.S. of Tara, chapters 21-26, was posted at "Rathmines" post office on Monday last, by my daughter, who took it there, had it weighed, and stamped and put into the office. The woman in charge, (it is a grocers shop) says that she gave the parcel to the postman and that it was duly forwarded, & is sure to reach its destination but if I do not hear from you tomorrow I will go to the General Post office in town, fill out the form, and have it forwarded, and the parcel traced from hence.

I am already much flattered by your good opinion of Tara, and I have no fear of its improving in interest, for I did not choose to expend "my ammunition" at once. You will see that two separate branches of the story meet at the beginning of the 3d Vol. or end of 2nd and the intention of all will gradually be apparent, but not the close, unless you went to the end first. I have endeavoured to make it lifelike and picturesque, and the only fear I have ever had, is its strangeness to the English public. I can only well imagine your uncles difficulty & doubt in the state he saw it: and hope he will understand it better in print as the tale progresses. I confess I am greatly cheered & gratified with what you have already written, and only pray you, or your uncle, that if you find anything you don't like, you will kindly mention it.

Believe me

yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

IV-V-VI

I send 3 chapters today with the return proofs & will send M.S. every day. I very stupidly sent ch. I. II. III of Vol. II without remembering the last page of Ch. III as that I have not paged what I now send. Does it matter? If so, then send me the number of page ending ch. VII & I will keep the account.

(note on side: last page p. 108 chap. XII)

[Ms. 4186, ff. 122-123]

14th July 1863

My dear sir

Many thanks for yours of yesterday. I sent four chapters of M.S. yesterday XIII-XVI of Vol. II, but don't think I can send any today as I had a sharp attack of my Indian fever yesterday and feel very weak today. I will therefore only reply to your note.

I have lost the account of the M.S. pages of Vol. II so please let the printers page them. I transferred two chapters of Vol. I to Vol. II but I should like to see how many pages of print Vol. I makes as it is, before determining in the actual beginning of Vol. II. You will see by the M.S. that I am excising liberally in order to economise room, but I do not wish to cut out too much, nor on the other hand to make the volumes too large. I suppose the whole of Vol. I will be set up this week, and you will be able to judge whether it regains more or not. If it does, you can transfer one, or two chapters of Vol. II to it.

"Shotee" is Pearl, a common name for horses & dogs. "Sahib" is sir, or "My lord," as it may be used. I will add notes explaining these terms. And as you are reading the proofs, I should be greatly obliged if you would note in pencil, any word that may require, in your opinion, a note: for all the Indian words and terms are so familiar to me, that I daresay I miss some here & there. My daughters however read the proofs after me, and are very sharp in these matters, so I hope there are not many "slips."

Please send the corrected proofs with the revises. Yours are capital workmen, and I never had so little trouble with the proofs before. Please let them know this with my compliments. I have not received revises D to K with your note, but have no doubt they will come.

The reading of Tara by any one new to it, and their opinion has necessarily been of the greatest interest to me. One cannot judge of ones own work because ones thoughts having been right in it have shut out other considerations. But I am gratified beyond measure by your interest in the Tale, and I feel quite sure it will increase. I hope you will like the scene in the Temple, but that only leads on to others of, I hope, greater interest still, till the two lines of story unite, and go on to the end. But I will not anticipate, and only trust to your kindness to be unsparing in criticism when I need it.

Believe me

Yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[footnote p.s. on ff. 122]

When Vol. I is all set up, the proportions of print to M.S. will be determined. Then I shall be able to see, with reference to the number of pages of M.S. of the other volumes, whether any should be cut out or not, & if any, how much. Also where the volumes can be divided.

[MS. 4728, ff. 9-10]

July 17, [1863]

My dear sir,

My cousin has returned the revises and I forward them to you by this post for your consideration and, if those I sent have not gone to press, please look on the alterations suggested before they do so. They will certainly want no more corrections. You will find my cousins proposed alterations in pencil; and such as I coincide with I have marked in red ink. Therefore the printer is to take notice of nothing in pencil only: and indeed when you have looked over the proof, the pencil marks had better be rubbed out, which will prevent chance of mistakes. After all, there is nothing of much consequence; but my cousin is very fastidious as to terms of expression and very careful of me as you will see by his note which I enclose. The proposed emendations are most numerous in Sheet A; in B. there is very little. C. has not come.

I have sent from D. to .K. also to h8m. Will it inconvenience you to delay printing them off until he returns them? Please say so if it will.

And will it inconvenience you my reading the revises at all? It would certainly delay the printing of each set of revises from 3 to four days. For he must send them back to me, and I forward them to you. Here they would only be delayed 12 hours, but I could not answer for his being content with so little time when he has other things to do.

Yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

[Acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 415-416]

45 George Street

Edinburgh

July 21, 1863

My dear sir

My uncle & I have both gone over carefully the corrections made by Mr. Taylor & those of them adopted by you. You are quite right in not adopting all as we think, many would take away from the charm of the dialogues & the character of your style which is extremely pleasant & to me very fresh.

Right pages of sheet A & sheet B had been printed off before the revise came to hand but the red ink alterations in remaining eight pages of each of these sheets have been made though we feel doubtful of the corrections beyond two or three being improvements. Of sheets C & D the half of the impression had been printed off before I got your note & we thought it scarcely worthwhile to cancel, which would be costly. However nothing more will go to press until the revises sent by you to Mr. Taylor have been returned. The delay is of no consequence. Will you be good enough to decide the correct spelling of the name Aurungeel & in a Biographical Cyclopaedia I find it spelt Aurungzeeb.

Two more sheets of Vol. III are sent you by same post as this. Enclosed I return with thanks Mr. Taylor's letter who we fear is rather too fastidious as to terms of expression admissible (sic) in a novel. I have had a very busy morning with Capt. Speke who has just left me with my uncle for his country house where he means to write his book, he is a capital fellow & true as steel with the most amiable disposition & a simplicity of character quite remarkable.

Believe me

yours very sincerely

William Blackwood

[Ms. 4186, ff. 124-127]

23d July 1863

My dear sir

I am much obliged by your last note which has given me renewed confidence, and with it came a note from my cousin who gives in, for I was obliged to tell him that he did not mend expressions occasionally, but took the salt & force out of them & made them conventional and anybody's -not mine-. We now understand each other, and he will be careful perhaps in looking up actual errors, where they exist, & which I would not have the Saturday Review get hold of for anything! I had actually got "then went" instead of then want once, and in another place "She" had been put instead of I. I had evidently been thinking in Mahratta, in which she is I!! I had got a fit of it's too, in another place: and under it, had made a muddle of a sentence. There he had me on the hop! To get anything like an acknowledgement out of him that the style is good -is to me wonderful, and I will copy what he says.

We have arranged a new plan. My two daughters, who are very sharp at the work, read the proofs, & detect errors, & I follow them. Revises will be similarly treated -so I hope there will be no error left among us.

It does not matter in the least that the half sheets were printed off, as I think that every material error has been corrected, and we are reading the proofs so narrowly now, that I don't think there will be much left to correct in revises.

If possible, I will send the remaining chapters of Vol. II today. If not, certainly tomorrow; that is as it was. But as two chapters of this volume were transferred to Vol. I, and I have cancelled one chapter altogether, it will require three chapters to make up the difference, which I have in Vol. III all ready. I should know

however, how much will be actually required to make up the volume, and perhaps you would be kind enough to let me know as soon as you conveniently can. Aurungzeeb is the proper way to spell

the emperors name. the 'E' at the end is not needed. If I had left out the 'g' it was a clerical error.

Captain Speke must be delightful. I have no doubt we have many mutual friends, for I have served on the borders of the Bombay Presidency all my life. He might make a lion of himself & roar very loud, but in all his speeches I have seen nothing but great modesty, which is the true characteristic of a gentleman. No one, but an amiable man, could have travelled through savages as he did.

My father wishes me to dedicate Tara to Lord Carlisle, and I would willingly do so if it would do no harm. A literary friend who was present when I read his note exclaimed, "Don't do any such thing. It was only the other day that some of the critics got hold of a man who had made a dedication and belaboured him dreadfully, called him a snob, and all sorts of hard names, and declared such 'literary flunkeyism must be put down!'"

Please ask your uncle about this -if there is the least danger in dedicating the book to a "Lord" (though he is the simplest man that ever was), I would not attempt it. There could be no objection to my dedicating it to a private individual my father, if he would have it, or my cousin Henry Reeve the editor of "Edinburgh," and the dearest friend of my life.

Or would it be best with no dedication at all?

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

P.S. My cousin asks for revises to be forwarded to his residence. "Weybridge -Surrey" As he gets them sooner & does not go to town every day.

J.E.T. 21st

"I am quite distressed to have given you so much trouble about the corrections the motive is my only excuse for all my impertinent remarks. You know, infinitely better than I can do, the merit of the tale, and I am sure as we go on, that I shall feel this fully. The last few sheets read to me much better -and I perfectly acknowledge the vigour and originality of the style. On no accounts let any silly criticisms of mine interfere with this. (I will not) Only take what I suggest at what it is worth -(Of course) I will pencil all my notes, and you can then simply transfer such as you adopt to your own proofs."

(note at top) Can you give me an answer to the following soon. WB

[Ms. 4186, f. 128]

Memorandum for printer

I am not sure whether the pages of M.S. in Vol. II are right. If they be so, there are 304 in this volume, from which 1239 lines or say 40 pages have been excised. This deducted from 304, leaves 264 pages.

If there be too little M.S. for this volume from which two chapters were transferred first to Vol. I, I am prepared to send as many as may be required from Vol. III to complete the amount and I think it will be better not to send any until I know.

Will you be so good as either cast up the whole, or get it into type, and so as to let me know exactly what is wanted as soon as

possible.

Meadows Taylor
Old Court
23d July 1863

[[Ms. 4186, ff. 129-130]
29th July [1863]

Colonel Taylor begs to inform the printer, that he forwards by this days post the remainder of the 2nd vol. of Tara, four chapters, which are 41 pages of M.S., but he supposes that the extra two pages (the printer says 39) will [not] signify much. The division of volumes is just as was intended, the scene at Tooljapoor closing with this volume.

There are now 290 pages of M.S. of Volume III and if the proportion of 39 pages of M.S. to 52 of print is right 290 pages of MS will give 386 which is a little too much. One chapter can however be dispensed with, & it will not be difficult to excise the rest, or all out of the whole.

In the 1st vol., 297 pages of M.S. less 715 lines or 22 pages of excisions, give 364 pages of print that is 275 actual pages M.S. equal 364 of print.

At this rate, or proportion, 275: 364: : 290 = 380 which is very near the same result and what is over in quantity can be very easily reduced.

Col. Taylor will be much obliged to the printers to let him know whether the previous assumptions are right. He will send some MS of Vol. III tomorrow.

[Ms. 4728, ff. 11-12]
30 July [1863]

My dear sir

I wrote to the printer on account of the M.S. of Vol. III but find there was a little mistake. I have 272 pages from Vol. III which in the proportions of 39 to 52 as given by the printer, would make the 3d vol. 362 pages of print, curiously near the 1st -I suppose also that Vol. II will be about the same, and I was glad to be able to make the division where I had originally intended it, that is where Tara is taken away from Tooljapoor after the attack on the temple by Afzool Khan. I think Vol. III is a trifle more closely written than Vol. II or I so I am reading over the M.S. I shall cut out bits than can be spared here and there, and if the printer finally thinks they are needed to complete quantity they can be retained, as they will be perfectly legible.

In returning proofs yesterday I forgot the revises from my cousin. He had noticed very little, only a phrase here & there & some punctuation. Most of the alterations are my own. I sent them today. To sheet P he adds, "all this reads charmingly" so he is coming round! I don't know whether he will read all the 15 sheets he had, but I think he will, as he has returned only to Q.

I have had the pleasure of hearing from your uncle, who says that I may dedicate Tara to Lord Carlisle, and writes very flatteringly about the book. I have no fear that Mr. Blackwood and yourself will fail in interest now, as events detailed will carry you through the 3d Vol., I hope more swimmingly than through I & II. Does it interest the printer or the P.D.'s? I am curious you see to hear what fresh minds say to it, and your and Mr. Blackwoods impressions are most valuable. I am not decided about the dedication to our king, as my old political chief General Fraser, has perhaps a higher

claim in me: but I will decide this by & large. believe me
yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

Would it help the book if I came over to Edinburgh? One of my daughters has been ailing a little lately and should have change and perhaps Scotch air would answer as well as any other. I suppose we could get lodgings on the outskirts of your city if needs be at a reasonable rate.

I can say nothing for certain & could not be away more than a fortnight in any case would this help? If we came we should be 4: self, 2 daughters & their maid.

[Ms. 4728, ff. 13-14]
Old Court
2d August [1863]

My dear sir

My cousin H. Reeve, who is the editor of the Edinburgh, writes to ask me whether I can give him the sheets of Tara in time for an article in the October number of the review, and I think it can be done.

What however do you say? He would of course like to know for certain, in order to ensure about space, and as soon as I hear from you I will write to him. You will get the whole of the M.S. of Vol. III this week, and I will not miss a day in sending. (Only if I can possibly help it.) I send 4 chapters by this post. I hope the M.S. for Vol. II is as fitted in as you wish. Of that of Vol. III I have no doubt.

If you would kindly allow the volumes of Tara to be sent as completed to Mr. Reeve I shall be much obliged. It will enable him to get on with the article if he writes himself, or to get it done. He writes that he goes to Scotland on the 8th and I have asked him where the vols. are to be sent to him, and will let you know when I hear from him. J.E.T. is correcting the sheets he had but whether he can do more or not I do not know. I will ask & let you know.

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood & Sons

[Acc. 5643, vol. D4, p. 418-419]
Edinburgh 4th Aug. 1863

My dear sir

I have had the pleasure of receiving your letters of 31st and 2nd inst. -I do not think there will be any difficulty in letting Mr. Reeve have sheets of Tara in time for a notice in October number of the Edinburgh of which I am glad to hear. At the rate you are returning revises for press I expect to see up to end of Vol. II ready for press the beginning of next week, when we could send Mr. Reeve the sheets of two first vols. if that would be of any advantage. In a fortnight after I think he would get Vol. III. We must try to publish in first week of September. It will be as good a time as any. Your calculations & assumptions as to extent of M.S. our printer tells me are all right, and 275 pages of M.S. make about 364 pp. of print. A few pages one way or other does not signify. The M.S. of Vol. II fits in famously and makes 364 pages. Proof will be sent you tonight. I am happy to hear there is a prospect of becoming personally acquainted with each other & I hope the change here will do Miss Taylor good. Doubtless your coming will help in getting the book out sooner, though we could hardly be getting on

much better or more rapidly than we are at present doing. Should you decide on coming here, I think lodgings at Trinity or Granton within 3 miles of Edinburgh and on the coast, would be pleasanter than the outskirts of our city. I regret that my mother and family are leaving home for the country this week, and as I have got an invitation for the 12th to Aberdeenshire Moors, I shall be from home next week or my mother should have been delighted to show your daughters any attention in her power. I shall however be back soon & I know my uncle will speedily come from Fife to meet you.

Hoping you will come and if neither my uncle or I are able to be in Edinburgh our manager Mr. Simpson will look after everything for you in the way of lodgings etc. In haste, believe me yours very sincerely (signed) William Blackwood

[Ms. 4728, ff. 15-17]

August 8th [1863]

My dear sir

As your nephew wrote to say he was going to the Highlands for the 12th and is most likely gone, I write to you in regard to the volumes of Tara to be sent to my cousin Mr. Reeve, who has promised a review of the book in the October number of the Edinburgh.

Mr. Reeve says, "I expect to be at S. Kibo castle, Donnock, Sutherland, then till the 20th ? and shall be glad if your two first volumes reach me there."

Could they be forwarded to him? Your nephew wrote that he expected they would be ready next week, and if so perhaps you would be so good as send them. I am anxious for an article on Tara in the Edinburgh because I hope Reeve will like the book and give it a help; & he will only review it if he does like it. He continues,

"You surely will not publish in September! It is generally considered very rash to bring anything out till the middle of October."

Your nephew wrote that the book might be out early in September and I mentioned this to my cousin, but you will be so much better a judge on this point than either he or myself, that I leave the matter entirely in your hands, being assured that you will incur no risk that can be avoided. Would the first week in October answer, that would give time I think for an article in the October number which is not normally published till the second week of the month.

I daresay you will be able to see your way plainly soon; I sent the concluding chapters yesterday & have no doubt all will be up quickly.

We have not quite decided about coming over for a week or so, but I should like to do so very much to have the pleasure of making your personal acquaintance. I am now going to Lord Carlisle about the dedication, and will let you know what he says.

"The King" was very gracious indeed, and accepted the dedication at once. He really seemed gratified by it, and I am glad to have had it in my power to make any return for many civilities to my daughters and myself.

believe me,
yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 131-132]

10th August 1863

Dear Sir

We have determined to come over to Edinburgh for a change, and shall arrive God willing, on Friday by the afternoon train from Carlisle: but I do not know the time. We go from this by the Silloth boat on Thursday evening which lands at Silloth about 9 a.m. and the train soon after leaves for Carlisle and Edinburgh: but I have not a time table to refer to.

Mr. William Blackwood desired I would write to you in regard to lodgings if we come over, as he should be absent: and if you could secure them for us for a week certain, or perhaps ten days, I should be much obliged. We should require a good drawing room, one bedroom for my daughters who would sleep together, one bedroom for myself, and one for a maid servant.

We should prefer being in town for so short a stay, & you may know of some convenient situation -Princes Street, Castle St. or anywhere central, or near you, would do best. I leave the terms to you, but at this season, 38£ 4 or thereabouts might be enough I think -I shall correct all proofs received up to Thursday morning and bring the last with me. Please keep Thursdays and Fridays for me. If you could arrange about the lodgings beforehand and send a note by one of your porters to meet me at the railway station on Friday afternoon to inform where they are, I should prefer going to them direct rather than to a hotel.

Yours faithfully
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 133-134]

8th Sept. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have not a proof of the prologue to Tara with me to refer to, but my London friend writes, that there is a misprint in it, which I am sorry to hear. It is in the 2nd para of the prologue.

'In AD 1347 a great portion of the Dekhan was -etc, etc,. and then further on, in the same, "Yousuf Adil Shah threw off his allegiance to the Bahmani Dynasty in 1849."

The 8 there should be 5 -AD 1549. I thought, and my daughters think also that we had corrected every error, but a figure may have escaped us. I am sorry for it is involving a slip of errata. Will you kindly have it seen to and oblige me.

We had a rough passage, and all brought colds home with us, which I hope will go away soon, for mine makes me very stupid. The day we crossed was bright and clear, but there was a good deal of heavy swells and we were all sick enough. My father arrived on Saturday evening, looking greatly the better for his travels, so that we are once more collected under the old roof.

I will send little bits to be posted with several of the copies you were so kind as promise me, when I know they are ready. You will also be the best judge about when I should write to Delane. I will do so when you let me know.

I trust this will find you all well at Strathtyrum, and we beg our very kind regards and remembrances. Please tell Mrs. Blackwood that "Sprig" had his first sitting for his portrait yesterday and that I will finish it as soon as I can. He sat up very gravely on his hind legs for a bit of biscuit somewhat in this fashion [sketch of Scotch terrier sitting on hind legs]

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 3719, #59]

10 Sept. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I was tearing up some old packets of letters this morning, and found among them a copy of the ballad of "Shorapoor" which I promised you. I have the pleasure to send it. I was obliged to write the best "Scotch" I could muster for the Highlanders which occasioned many growls from the native clerk in my office who had charge of the prss. "There were not comma's enough for the endings of words, and - he did not understand the language"- Do not therefore be too critical on the printing, which was done for the men of the 74th inf. - whatever you may be on the writing.

Is it too much to ask for the copies of Tara for Dublin. That is

1 Lord Carlisle

1 Lady Rachel Butler

3 for me.

to be sent when they are ready? I should like Lord Carlisle to have his when the binding is done, and Lady Rachel writes that she is very impatient, and wants to see Tara as soon as possible. So does also my father, who tried to read the M.S. but could not succeed.

The whole could come in one parcel, either by the Globe Express Company or by the Glasgow Steamer.

With kind remembrances from my daughter to your mother and sister, believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 135-136]

Sept. 11th, 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Many thanks for yours of yesterday. I am very glad to hear that the mistake is so easily remediable but I was very nearly leading you into a new one -that is- 1589- which is wrong- it should be 1489 as originally printed, and now corrected. I see exactly how the sum occurred and have no doubt it was an accident, but I have a notion that the little compositors ears must have been rather warm, after Mr. Hutchinsons explosions.

We are getting rid of colds gradually, but my daughters were rather severe, and went into their throats; of which however there is no better account this morning. My fever came to a crisis on Tuesday night in the shape of bilious sickness and sharp diarrhea. An effort of nature I think to throw it off: for I have been better since and hope for a long respite.

I will write and ask my cousin whether he has room for the article of Tara in the ensuing Edinburgh, & if so when he publishes. It would not do for Tara to come out after the review, but a week before would be ample. I will let you know about this when I hear.

Can the copy for Mr. Palmer be sent to India soon? or rather has it been already forwarded? If not, a copy with the corrected page would be best, and the delay of a mail would hardly signify.

We all join in our kind remembrances to your circle, & believe me,

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 137-138]

Sept. 14, 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Reeve writes, on Saturday, as follows about the article on 'Tara'
"If you will fix the publication for the 15th October, that will suit everybody. The question as to the article is simply whether there will be room for one without turning out any other contribution to which I am committed. This depends partly on the length of certain articles, and partly on the punctuality of certain writers; but I fully intend to give you a notice even though I may have only a few pages to spare. If it is not done, it will really be out of my power this time."

I suppose that 15 October will be about the time you have proposed, and I have no doubts, if he can, that Reeve will give me a notice in this number, and if he cannot, that I am sure of one for the next, but I feel altogether fully confident that he will not delay it. The review seldom comes out till the close of the month, so that there would be ample time for a notice between the 15th and the appearance of the review.

If you fix the 15th, when should I write to Delane? About the 1st, or later?

Reeve had just arrived at home on the 12th and found Vol. III of Tara waiting for him. He was going to begin it that night he says, & I will tell you what he says if he gives any opinion. I hope you liked it in print.

My young ladies join me in best regards to Mrs. Blackwood and your circle, and I beg to add that "Sprig" is progressing and that "The Portrait" is pronounced satisfactory.

believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

I have not seen Lady Rachel since we returned, but she has invited herself to lunch when her husband returns, and when she comes, I will deliver your messages.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 139-141]

18th Sept. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Pray accept my best thanks for all you are kindly doing about the copies for presentation. My father is looking very anxiously for Tara, and will give her a hearty welcome, & I will take Lord Carlisles copy to him as soon as it arrives.

I enclose the slips for the other copies, please have them posted on, and directed as I have labelled each. I have altered my Uncle Mitfords, for he is just now with his son in law Amhurst at Didlington and if the copy is made, to be forwarded on Monday, please have it sent there.

If however it is delayed a week or so, please send it to Hunmanby, according to the memo which Mr. Gibson has.

I do not know about General, or Colonel, Grant Duff. If he is alive, I will send a line to be put into a copy for him. If he is dead which is very likely it does not signify.

A friend of mine, one of my old assistants, is going out to Bombay by next mail, and has promised to take a copy for me to Mr. J.T. Crossley, who is the agent of Smith & Elders House there. I am anxious that he (Crossley) should have an early one in order to get orders from others, and he will get the book reviewed in the Bombay Saturday Review, and in the daily local papers. Will you kindly, if you agree with me as to the advisability of sending one -have one, or if you like two copies, sent to

Captain J.A. Allardyce

9 Holles Street
Cavendish Square
London

I think it important that there should be an early review of the book in Bombay, because it may get orders from the Book clubs in that Presidency, and because natives, who read English, may be interested in it. It is the only Mahratta Tale that ever was written, and all the people there are Mahratta. I have written to Allardyce on the subject, and will write to Mr. Crossley, whom I know, by the next mail again to apprise him that the books will reach him.

I think it would be advisable to send a copy to the Editor of the "Englishman" in Calcutta, and one to the editor of the Madras "Atheneum", but I do not know either, nor any agent in either city; you may possibly have agents there already.

I was anxious to hear Reeves final verdict upon Tara, which I received yesterday. I will extract what he says.

"I have now finished reading Tara, and I think you have kept up the interest to the end very skilfully-

The expedient of proclaiming herself 'sutee' is certainly a most extraordinary resource to take in Taras position, and the effect very great in your story.

You shine most in your descriptions of Indian manners and scenery which really are unique, & highly picturesque."

He does not quite understand how a Mahomedan gentleman could marry Tara, but I have explained this, and one or two other small matters about which he was uncertain, and I hope for a favorable (sic) review from him.

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 142-143]

24th Sept. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

The copies of Tara have reached me quite safely & please accept many thanks for the beautiful manner in which the book is got up. The copy for Lord Carlisle is quite lovely. My father is in the greatest delight, and is now absorbed in the book which he tried to read in MS but could not accomplish. I was glad of it, for he will be much more satisfied as it is. Lady Rachels copy went to her yesterday & she will come & lunch with me as when she has read it, and, as she writes, "have a talk over it."

A letter to Mr. Delane goes by this post. I have requested his interest in the work for a review of it in the Times, upon its own merits -and told him that you will send a copy.

I forgot one copy in my list, and if the one noted for General Grant Duff has not been sent, may I have another? It is for a dear old friend, and I enclose a slip with her direction. If it could be sent to her in London -72 Connaught Terrace, before the end of this month, she would be sure to get it.

Sprigs portrait, and a view of the city of Hyderabad in the Dekhan are finished for Mrs. Blackwood & I hope to dispatch them in a day or two. We write in kindest regards, to your circle & believe me

Yours very truly

Meadows Taylor

Lord Carlisle is absent in the N. of Ireland but I will take the copy to him as soon as he arrives.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 144-145]

26th Sept. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I enclose a note from Mr. Marshman who was Editor of the "Friend of India" in India, to which I used to contribute & he is an old correspondent, and political ally of mine. I thought he was Editor of the Indian departmt. of the Times, and so wrote to him to review Tara, as he could do well, from his intimate knowledge of India, but it does not appear he can do so, & his recommendation of writing to Delane I had anticipated. I have not had a reply yet, and will let you know what he says when it arrives.

The offer of a review in the Spectator is not however I think, to be despised, as I believe it is one of the influential literary journals: and Mr. Townsend who succeeded Marshman as editor of the Friend, -is also an old correspondent, and quite competent to review Tara, I mean as to knowledge of the country and its people. Will you kindly therefore send a copy for Mr. Townsend, addressed to Mr. Marshman, 7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London. That is if you concur with me in the advisability of doing so.

My cousin Charles Weld, is on the reviewing staff of the Atheneum, & I have just heard from him that he comes to stay with us next Wednesday so I have asked him to get leave to review Tara; and if he succeeds he can write the article here. I thought he was somewhere "on the Moselle" making one of his tours, which he describes so pleasantly; but he has just returned. With our best regards, believe me

yours very truly
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 146-147]

27th Sept. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

This is only to give you the last from Reeve, which has just arrived, so that you may feel sure about the Edinburgh.

"I have completed a short article on Tara, and I trust I shall be able to make room for it. The passage I have selected by way of specimen is the interview between Sivajee and the Khan of Pritabgurr, because it appeared to me to be complete and intelligible in itself. I have not attempted to abridge the story itself, as that only spoils peoples pleasure in reading it.

The Review will appear the 16th October: of course it will be well that the work should be out a week sooner."

This quite agrees, I mean the time, with what you last wrote, and I have no more to say. I only hope I may be able to secure the Atheneum: if so we shall be pretty strong as far as the press is concerned.

With our best regards
Believe me
Yours most truly
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 148-149]

Old Court

Oct. 1863 (bet. 16th & 25th)

My Dear Mr. Blackwood

I ought to have answered your last note sooner, but I have been working very hard with a memorial and some Persian papers which have to accompany it, and many matters have been deferred.

Many thanks to you for your kind offer in regard to money matters. I do not however require many things at present. Should I do so, I will ask you freely, but at present I can get on very well.

I do hope that Tara will do as well as we expect, on every account. I foresee it will take some time for the book to be known. The title is no indication to what it really is. We received the Edinburgh Review yesterday and were charmed with the notice in it which affected me a good deal, as convincing me how perfectly I had been understood. I hope you also have seen it. I think it ought to help the book considerably, & trust it may. I shall be most anxious to see your reviewers opinion, also. The only other notice I have seen is in the Atheneum, which I think must have been written by some priggish "Competition" walla from the way in which he (mis)-spells Indian words. Sati for Sutee, after the "Missionary" system. Puna for Poona. Toljapar for Toljapoor, etc., and there was a small parade of Arabic grammar too which was amusing. I shall be very careful about Delane you may be sure, and shall look with interest to notices in the leading morning papers and weeklies.

I am going to London on the 26th and shall be there a fortnight perhaps. I shall be at my cousins,

H. Reeve Esq.
62 Rutland Gate
Knightsbridge

I hope Mr. Sprig arrived safely -& with our most & best regards to Mrs. Blackwood believe me

most sincerely yours
Meadows Taylor

Last week was for the most part stormy & rainy, but the last three days have been mild spring & summer weather, & I hope you have the same.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 150-151]

62 Rutland Gate
London
Nov. 2, 1863

My Dear Mr. Blackwood

Many thanks for your note. I sent for the Magazine on Saturday evening, and was quite charmed with the review of Tara. It is indeed most flattering and all I could wish. I am quite sure my daughters and my father will be charmed with it.

Will you be so kind as convey my very grateful thanks to the writer whoever he, or she may be. I am very thankful at having been so entirely understood, and, as the review proves, read with such minute pains and interest.

Indeed the press has been very complimentary throughout: much more than I expected, or had a right to expect from my want of experience. The only unfavorable article is, where I expected it, in the Saturday Review, and I think there is a good deal of inconsistency between the preamble which is highly flattering, and the conclusion which is otherwise: for after all, there is no very grave fault found, nor am I accused of dulness (sic) or stupidity. The question of spelling of names, and offending information, are open ones which do not affect the story.

My friends tell me they cannot get the book at any of the libraries because it is in great demand. I trust therefore that the sale will be satisfactory, and as soon as I possibly can, I will go to Mr. Langford.

I shall not stay here longer than I can help, but my business,

which is of great importance to my children, will necessarily occupy some days.

Please give my very kind regards to Mrs. Blackwood. My daughters would join I know if they were here. I am so glad the portrait is liked.

Believe me,
yours most sincerely
Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4728, ff. 18-19]

62 Rutland Gate

London

8th Nov. [1863]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

If you would like Tara to be reviewed in France, or think it would assist her, I can get it done through a friend by sending a copy to

Monsr. C.F. Audley

40 Rue de Madame

Paris.

It will be reviewed in "La France" and another leading daily paper, and, as my friend hopes also in the Revue de Deux Mondes. I am going to send a copy to the Emperor whom I used to know when he was a private gentleman in London, and one to the Queen through Lady Augustus Bruce; and I have begged Mr. Langford to have two copies plainly bound for these purposes on my own private account.

Nothing can be more flattering or satisfactory than the remarks of the London press, and I hear that the book is popular at clubs, 'not to be got etc.' I do hope it will do in time.

If you approve of the French matter will you kindly instruct Mr. Langford to send a copy to Paris according to the direction.

Pray give my kind regards to Mrs. Blackwood and your circle & believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

I shall be in London for some days yet. My business is with Sir Charles Wood who does not come to town till next week.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 161-162]

Tuesday [1863]

circa 10 Dec. [based on date of letter sent with it]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I arrived at home yesterday morning glad to get back after my long absence. I hope the affairs in London were left in good condition, at any rate I could do no more, and the matter is in the hands of the Indian Council and the Secretary of State.

I received last night a copy of the Bombay Saturday Review in which there is a very favourable notice of Tara which I hope will be attended with good results. Mr. Copley, Smith & Elder agent assures me he will push the work by every means in his power, and will send me copies of all notices.

I heard also from Mr. Palmer of Hyderabad and extract what he says because if I had made the least slip as to correctness of customs or speech, etc. he would have been down upon me very sharply, and there is no man living now in India who knows natives, & their customs etc., like him, or at all comparable with him.

"I have received your book and have perused the first volume and 64 pages of the second. I have been so much interested by it that I

have had H---- and B--- to assist L---- in reading it to me (he is blind MT). I will endorse all your descriptions of matters in general -of ceremonies- and opinions, as stoutly true, to the very letter. Your style is good, clear, gentlemanly, and though you even, painterlike, are rather minute in your discussions of persons--not pedantic. I am certain the book will take with those who understand the inhabitants of India and as the story has interest besides, if it can be understood that there is truth in the painting, it will take with all those who may desire to proper knowledge of Indian character. There are scenes in it and delineations of official persons which if Mookhtah Ool Moolk (**Prince Minister of the Nizam) would have had the book might instruct him as to his own domicile."

I shall hear how he likes the book as a whole by the next mail, but there was no opinion for which I was so anxious as for this, and for the Indian criticisms also as they will prove that the book stands actual local tests, or not.

The enclosed which has just come, I send you as a curiosity. I have not read the article to which it refers, but the writer, Sir Charles Hopkinson is quite right. My daughter writes in kind regards & believe me

yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 152-153]
18th Dec. 1863

My dear Mr. Blackwood

When I was last at the India Office I heard that the department for the suppression of Thuggee and Dacoity in India had been very recently merged into that of the general police, and as the good done has been very great, perhaps it would be opportune to notice it by an article which should comprise an account of both crimes and their varieties. I obtained some printed papers on the subject, and think I can obtain more data enough to make an interesting article.

Are you inclined to trust me with an article for the Magazine or do you think one on the subject would suit you? Pray do not hesitate for a moment to say no -if it would not: but if you like the idea please tell me how much space you can give me, and being otherwise idle I will set to work at once upon the paper.

Alice is greatly delighted with her book and shows it in great triumph to everyone who comes.

With our kind regards
believe me
very sincerely yours
Meadows Taylor

Miscellaneous undated letters for 1863

[Ms. 4186, ff. 154-155]
Sunday eve. 1863

My dear sir

I write just a line to say that my cousin thinks he would delay the revises too long (he has 15 sheets) and says, as he can only do a little at night, he had better not detain the work.

I quite agree with him as there is literally very little to alter, only the turn of an expression one way or another here & there. I write to him to send the revises he has done, & I will read them all through again very carefully, & send them on to you as fast as

possible.

Please do not send duplicates of revises to him after receipt of this, and single sheets to me will do. If there is any material correction required I can easily ask for a second revise.

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 156-157]

8 St. Johns Place

Sunday [1863]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I enclose a list of copies for my private distribution. I hope I am not too greedy, but I was allowed 12 copies of the former books, so have entered that number. If however I ask too much do not hesitate in the least to restrict me to your own number whatever it may be. Those for myself, Lady Rachel, and Lord Carlisle can I hope be made into a parcel and sent to me. The rest can perhaps be forwarded direct either from London or hence as most convenient. I will write to General Grant Duff when I can find out his address. As I have made use of his history for Tara I think it is only complimentary to send him a copy: but I do not know him personally.

I will also write to General Fraser who is my old political chief in India and was always urging me to "write."

Mr. Palmer of Hyderabad is my father in law and is most anxious for a copy. I have therefore entered one to be sent to him by the first mail to Bombay, and it can be dispatched from hence at my charge.

I fear I give no end of trouble but pray you to excuse it.

believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 158-159]

Monday

My dear Sir

I send herewith two more revises for press, which reached me yesterday from my cousin. I can't adopt all that he suggests; but here & there he finds a real error which had escaped me -and makes a judicious alteration: and therefore if you have no objection, I think it would ensure perfect corrections if he saw all the revises

He will growl now & then I daresay but I don't mind that. If you agree with me please send one of the duplicate revises to him, and another to me. When his comes to me, I will correct both & send them to you. This arrangement will save at least two ?.

I have made the needful corrections at page 119 & 124 of the proof sent. Kinirys was right with no apostrophe, and Goura singular is better than Gouras plural.

You will get in todays parcel two sheets for press and 3 for revise including sheets A & B of Vol. II. I am so glad to hear you don't find Vol. II too long.

Many thanks I am better today. Well indeed. I used to get fever once every month, often twice -new & full moon: but I have had no return since March last. With this new moon I hope for a further respite.

Believe me

Yours very truly

Meadows Taylor
Wm. Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, ff. 165-166]

Saturday [1863]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

You may like to hear the Queens acknowledgement of Tara through Lady Augustus Bruce who writes to Reeve.

"I am commanded to say that the Queen is graciously pleased to accept the volumes sent by Capt. Meadows Taylor, and to beg you to convey her majestys thanks and acknowledgements."

I hope she may like it, and I hope also to hear from another Lady whether she does so or not.

I have not yet heard from the Emperors secretary, but I only wrote to him very shortly before I left London. I will write to you hereafter what I hear from that Quarter. I trust the endeavour I have made to get Tara noticed in Revu des Deux Mondes may be successful. The last number had a long article on the Ring of Amasis, which curiously enough is prefixed by a quotation of

(Ulla Diluyn to Leonyn, as procible?) Marat which it is not by the by, but no matter, for I think from this they must have the book.

We were with Lady Rachel the day before yesterday who showed us your Xmas present with great delight. It is indeed a most beautiful book. I see that you have made your peace most completely.

Believe me

yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4186, ff. 167-168]

28 Castle St. [1863]

My dear sir

I am glad to tell you that Reeve likes the opening of Tara very much. He had read about 50 pages, "with very great interest. The descriptions of Indian life, he says, is the most real, minute, and lifelike thing I have read of India. I hope I may be able to make room for an article on the book in Oct. and I would most gladly write it a long account, etc."

I am very glad he has taken kindly to Tara, as I value his opinion very much. I daresay he will write more as he reads on.

About the dedication he says, "If you do insert a dedication at all, it should be I think in the form of a neat letter. He is against a "monumental dedication" altogether."

So I have drafted the accompanying, which if you approve of can go to press at once. If not I will try to mend it.

Believe me

yours sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4186, f. 169]

Memorandum

One revise has been sent to Mr. J.E. Taylor. Please to wait one day. If he finds any correction needful he will forward it at once. If not he will keep it.

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4194, ff. 3-4]

16th January 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Would you like to have an article for 'Maga' which I have written from my notes. "A Day in Camp and Kacheri." It is the record of an actual days employment made for my girls, and contains a variety of subjects and incidents, from a good sport after a hog in the morning including settlement of a boundary line, to a days hard work till bedtime. It could divide into four parts, morning, forenoon, afternoon & evening, and would be a true picture of a hard worked commissioners daily life. Even to the minutiae of household occurrences and the society of native gentlemen who have come to camp on business.

If you like the idea of it I will send you the M.S. but not else. At any rate you have the refusal of it. I think it would take about 4 sheets of Maga print.

We all write in best regards and believe me
very sincerely yours
Meadows Taylor

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D5, p. 57]

Edinburgh

January 18 1864

My dear Captain Taylor

It was in my mind to ask you to give some sketches of Modern Indian Life and it gives me pleasure to hear of your Day in Camp & Kacheri which I think very likely to suit me. There is a chance that I may have room in the forthcoming No. and as the month is far on I have telegraphed to you to send M.S. at once. I hope you have avoided using Indian words unintelligible to the general reader as much as possible otherwise I feel very confident that your excellent style and power of vivid description will make this account a day of the work you know so well extremely interesting.

I have received a memorandum of the sales of Tara to be made up and will have the pleasure of writing you soon with enclosure.

Mrs. Blackwood sends her best remembrances to the young ladies & believe me

always yours truly
(signed) John Blackwood

[Ms. 4194, ff. 5-6]

20th January 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Many thanks for your two notes, one of which has just arrived. I wished to write yesterday, but was obliged to go into town, and could not get back again in time to save the post. I have a lecture to give tomorrow evg., and have had to get at Indian Historical dates at the college. I was not however unmindful of your kind telegram which was answered at once by me to London, where I had left the M.S. with a friend -so that you get it even as soon as if I had dispatched it from this?, perhaps sooner.

If I had been certain that you would have liked the subject, or its treatment, I would have sent you the M.S. at once: but the home critics who are generally sharp enough on me, liked it, and declared it must be sent to you and so I wrote. I am quite sure that you will not hesitate a moment in saying it wont do if it wont: but if you like the article generally, and do not like any particular passages, & will kindly mark them with pencil, I will do my best to arrange all

to meet your wishes. If however it wont do at all, please return the M.S. to me at your convenience.

Nothing could be done for the Feby. number, but there is plenty of time even to rewrite the whole for a beginning in March, if you like.

My brother Weld sent the enclosed yesterday, and my father has copied it. If it is up to your mark, you are welcome to it. Please look at my dear old governors writing -not bad for 85 is it! We all write in kindest regards to Mrs. Blackwood & your circle & believe me

Yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D5, p. 68

Edinburgh January 29, 1864

My dear Captain Taylor

I enclose a cheque £300 for Tara the sales of which up to Jan. 21 amounted to 749. This is not what the book ought to have done but considering the strangeness of the subject it is very good & I hope by & bye to have the pleasure of reporting to you the exhaustion of the edition & remitting the further sum of £50 which then becomes due to you in terms of our agreement. It is a very small sale from a book that has been so well received but the names or the utter unacquaintance of the public with the whole subject were a barrier to anything like general poularity. I feared this from the first & in spite of my opinion of the excellence of the story I should not have been surprised if we had been left in the lurch with only a sale of a few hundreds so I am very well pleased with the result. I have not been able to look at your Journal of a Days Work again but I shall do so soon. My nephew send his best remembrances and believe me

Always yours truly

John Blackwood

[Ms. 4194, ff. 7-8]

30 January 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Pray accept my sincere thanks for your kind note of yesterday and cheque for £300. I dont know that I deserve this so soon, but it is very welcome, and what you say of Tara much enhances my gratification in its receipt. I with you can only regret that it has not had a larger sale, but I think you bear me witness that I worked at the subject conscientiously. Perhaps, as a literary friend said to me only yesterday the sale may continue as the work becomes more largely known in the provinces, and I very cordially hope that it may. I don't know what amount of copies has gone to India, but I hear from friends there that there are none to be had at the presidencies, and I hope a good many will have been ordered, & so will live in the hope of the other £50.! Not for the moneys sake, but that this edition should not only go -but another be thought of: which, whenever you please, I am quite ready to revise thoroughly.

It supprises me that the names are found to be a difficulty, for though new & strange, I hoped the story would carry people through them; that, no one seems to object to, and I think I may say without vanity, that no work of fiction since Tara, has had the same praise from the reviewers.

What do you say to going on with the series? I have been lying by hard resting, but shall be prepared, I hope, by and bye to begin 1757, beginning with the "Black Hole," and ending with the battle of Plassey, and your kindness has been so great in regard to Tara that

the refusal is quite at your disposal.

Pray take your own time about the article.

we all write in kindest remembrances to Mrs. Blackwood and your nephew

and believe me

always yours truly

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4194, f. 9]

Received from Messrs. John Blackwood and Sons the sum of three hundred pounds, being on account of the sales of "Tara," as per agreement

Meadows Taylor

£300

Old Court

Harolds Cross

30 January 1864

[Ms. 4194, ff. 10-11]

February 9th 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I think you may like to see the Bengal Citizen upon Tara which I recd. by last mail. It is by the Friend of India the ablest weekly paper in India and with the largest circulation. You will see that it is very civil and flattering, and you may perhaps like a bit for your advertisements, but please return me the slip for the book of extracts which, in Alice and Amys eyes, is very precious.

A friend writing to me about Tara cannot understand why with such reviews & notices as it gained from the press, the whole edition did not go off at once, and I cant say either, but suppose that the Calcutta Reviewer is right in what he writes in the opening paragraph. My friend also mentions 'that Tinsley had not one single copy of John Marchmonts Legacy in the House on the day week of its publication, and had to send to Miss Braddon for her own copies to fulfill an order from some 'swell' in the country. Is it not wonderful?' Indeed it is, but one can't account for taste and I'm afraid sensation novels are not in my line.

We all join in kindest regards & believe me

yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4194, ff. 14-15]

14th February 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Many thanks for your note of yesterday. I am glad to hear of the offer for the Tauchnitz edition of Tara because it will lead to the work being more extensively known. I suppose the permission to reprint does not include right of translation; but however this may be, I leave the matter entirely in your hands, and accept the £25 which you advise.

I hope the Calcutta & general Indian reviews of Tara will add very considerably to its sale, and shall be disappointed if it does not. What I wanted your uncle & yourself to see by the review of the Friend of India was, that the book stands the test of Indian criticism as to correctness of character and detail, which I had hoped for, and which I hope may not be without its effect in England present and future. I have not lost my faith in Tara yet I assure

you, and am glad to hear of the steady demand you mention. It is almost impossible that the order from the Indian book clubs can have reached England yet.

We are all well thank you, and my belongings send their kind remembrances to your mother sister & yourself. Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Wm Blackwood Esq.

P.S. there are a few corrections to be made in the reprints of Tara which I will send you tomorrow, or as soon as I can.

M.T.

[Ms. 4194, ff. 16-17]

20th February 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

After all there are very few errors in Tara, and I send you a list, not wholly of errors, but of slight alterations also which may make the sense clearer. The only decided errors that can be found are "eyelashes" for eyebrows, and 'fell' for fall, in the first line of the little ballad at the end of Vol. III, p. 286. These certainly require correction for one cant say bushy eyelashes, and fell makes bad grammar of the first verse of the ballad.

Will you kindly advise Messrs. Williams & Norgate of these errors, indeed if my memorandum were sent to them, and they have agreed to reprint Tara in the Tauchnitz edition. The corrections could be made very easily. My father has recently reread the book very carefully, and could find nothing to alter except what I have entered in the memo.

With our kindest regards

believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Very wintry weather, hard frost & threatening of snow which is lying thick upon our hills.

[Ms. 4194, ff. 18-19]

27th February 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Many thanks to you for your note of yesterday, and for all your kindness about Tara. I am very glad she is going upon the continent, and hope her printing will be a pleasant one. I have signed the agreement, and my signature is duly witnessed. My bank in London is "the Oriental" Threadneedle St., and if Messrs. Williams & Norgate or your agent will pay the amt. to my credit there, I shall be much obliged.

I have a dear cousin in Germany to whom I have been longing to send a copy of Tara. Do you think a copy might be sent to Leipsie? (sic) If so I will send the address to Williams & Norgate without troubling you with it.

We have had no snow to speak of only one or two very short sprinklings which disappeared in an hour, but we have had sharp frost, and todays is about as hard a one as we have had. There were one or two days skating in early winter but none since. If this frost holds however there may be more. It has been a long winter, not irksome, but a gloomy one.

On the whole my girls have stood it very well, and are very gay, but not dissipate. We live too far from town to allow of 2 or 3 parties a night which is the ordinary practice here, & two baths a

week is enough in all conscience. We are very busy now with one opera recital, for the Irish Academy of Music which is a very pleasant matter all amateur. We have done Trovatore & shall do Norma on Monday. The operas are not acted, only sung, & the chorusses are really beautiful not only in appearance -80 of the best looking girls of the upper classes in Dublin being in it and 50 gentleman, but in reality.

My young ladies return you their very best thanks for your account of your family ball, which must have been delightful in all respects. I can imagine your costume very well. I was once at a fancy ball in India in the court costume of Hyderabad, & caroused with all my native friends without being recognized in the least. An oriental dress that is a real one makes a complete metamorphosis. We all join in kindest regards to your mother, sister & to your uncle and Mrs. Blackwood. Also, believe me

Yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4728, ff. 1-2]
1st March [1864]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Many thanks for the cheque for £25 which answers perfectly well, and goes to the A.M. today.

Our concert went off capitally last night, and the Concert Room was crowded. I do not think there was a seat unlet. Lord Carlisle was there, and all the celebrities etc of Dublin. Last year our two concerts made £358 for the reading of music which, since government withdrew their donation, the houses now support -and I hope we shall do even better this season, for we have had better houses. I will send you todays paper with an account of the opera, Norma, which, or rather a selection from it was performed. We do not act the opera, but recite from the orchestra, and the effect of the mellow trained voices in the chorus is I think very beautiful.

Our frost also has broken up, and we have today rain, which has been absent a long time. I know all the hounds about here, both fox and ? , are busy but I have given up hunting long since and cannot take to it again.

believe me
yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

I suppose Baron Tauchnitz will not be long printing off Tara, and I am glad to hear that I may be able to get a copy to my cousins about which I will write to you again.

MT

Do you think Tauchnitz would like to reprint the Thug? I should be glad my books were in company.

[Ms. 4194, ff. 20-21]
10th March 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of sending you my father in law Mr. Palmers opinion on Tara, which I was anxious to get, for there is no one alive that I know of who has the knowledge & experience of Indian folks & their manners etc. that he has. He has lived to 85 among natives of all ranks, and had I made any blunder I know he would not have spared me. So you may be satisfied that there is none in Tara, & though I do not think you ever doubted the truth of the pictures in it, you may be glad to have your kind opinion confirmed.

We all write in very kind regards & remembrances to Mrs. Blackwood
& yourself & believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

Many thanks for your kind negotiation with Baron Tauchnitz. A German friend of mine has offered to translate it, and heard from the Baron today saying that he had referred the matter to the publisher in Leipsie of German translations and added his recommendation. If I hear any more on the subject I will let you know. MT

[Ms. 4194, ff. 12-13]

(sent with 10th March 1864 letter)

You tell me to give you my opinion on Tara from which I believe you want me to give you a lengthened opinion. Non sum gnalis eram: I think I told you that the book is illustrative of Indian manners, morals and their mode of thinking. In this respect, if it be not the only work extant I suppose there is none to compete with it. Your description of scenery and of persons excellent and taking -Tara is introduced, though not of a description of being to be met with in ones ordinary walks -with good effect and I like all the ceremonies and the sensations excited by them, preceding her initiation to become a moorly as true to the letter. The name for such is Bhugtum, and then Devries are different. Can a Brahmin become a Moorly? Your description of the spot where Rama and Lukshmun are waiting for the Lalla you will be surprised to hear was of all things the most interesting to me, which I can only ascribe to a fancy which will not suit the imagination, that I know the spot, and that I have somehow been concerned in an adventure of the sort, not as you may suppose to rob, but of being robbed or attacked. If it has been so however I cannot recollect it, but I know the little temple into the penetration of which you are found to creep -with a blighted tree, and a mound of stones near it occupied by truculent fellows. Moro Trimmul is an intimate acquaintance of mine, whom I see almost daily, engaged in intrigues, not to entrap Tara, but in every movement of his life for all manner of purposes. I like the scene in the palace of Beejapoor where the priest and the Brahmin are introduced and confronted. Both are true to life, and I like the kings following upon this event, the hall of audience, and his speech. I like very much the kings meeting with Pahar Singh disguised as a Yogee, and all the disciples of locality waiting upon it. I like the passages at the Rohwals, they are very characteristic of Mussulman measures, and you have properly made the Rohwala Persian for false and treacherous as the Indians are, the Persians surpass them. The scenes in Sivajees castle are particularly taking. The matter itself of an interesting nature, the details are beyond any knowledge for which I have a parallel, though some sort of an analogy from which my mind bears me towards them, as right representations, assures them to me as correct. I cannot be more elaborate, I want power of mind and body. To sum up all I think the work excellent though I fear with some one of your reviewers that being an Indian story, it may not bring all the grist to your mill which it is entitled to share.

Letter from Mr. Palmer

6th Feby. 1864

[Ms. 4194, ff. 22-23]

June 8th 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have just returned from Killarney, and think I have material for an article, descriptive of course, which may induce home tourists to venture there and enjoy its beauties, more than they do at present. Would you like me to send it to you for the chance of the July number if you happen to like it? If so please tell me how much it should be in space.

I had a very sharp return of my old enemy, fever, about Easter, and was a long time getting strong, but I am much better now, indeed quite well, and hope for a long respite. I think the Killarney trip did me much good, but I was disappointed in fishing: the lakes were ten feet below their usual level, and nothing could be induced to rise.

We all unite in kindest regards to Mrs. Blackwood & believe me

Most sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4194, ff. 24-25]

29th July 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have been annoyed by a sharp attack of opthalmia, and have been able to do nothing for the last three weeks or more, till yesterday when I tried my eyes at a few letters, and find them better. There is no active inflammation in them now, and I hope the weakness will soon go off. So, as you may suppose, I have been entirely idle, only employing my leisure in occasional attempts to read, and unsteadily looking at a wall of green colour in a dim room, which I can't say was a very cheerful occupation. I have therefore done nothing about the paper on Killarney but will try my hand on it soon.

What however I now write about, and wish to ask you is, whether it suits your views to engage me for another book? I ask because I have received ventures from one publishing house in London of some note, to write one for them on very advantageous terms, and I feel that I am in duty bound to you to give no decided reply until I hear from you. I have nothing ready, or even so much as begun, and the soonest that I could promise completion of another book to any one, would - god willing- be next year. The subject would be the Clive period of the Tara series -1757, for I feel that the epoch is important, and admits of much dramatic treatment, nor has anyone ventured upon it before. There is no objection to it by those who have made ventures to me, indeed the contrary, and so the book will, I hope, be written in time for someone. I should not however have mentioned the subject of this note to you for some time to come had it not been for the proposals which, very unexpectedly, have been made to me.

We all join in very kind regards & remembrances to Mrs. Blackwood & your nephew & believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4194, ff. 26-27]

Summer Grove

Near Whitehaven

August 26th 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

We have come over from Dublin to visit our friends here, and to

get change of air which was needful for all of us, myself especially as I had been for a long time a very ailing body, with attacks of fever, dyspepsia and what not else very depressing and weakening, & I am glad to say I am already very much better and hope to be quite well before our visit is ended. Dublin has been very hot and dry this summer, and the fine bracing air of Cumberland was needed to get me, all of us indeed sound again. We have an invitation to stay with the Alex Dunsmures who have a house near the Trossachs when we get away from this & I hope we shall be able to avail ourselves of it, but a good deal depends upon my father who is alone at home, and if solitude distresses him we must return to him. At present however he is urging us to stay away & get quite strong again.

My protracted illness rendered me unfit to write anything, else I should have sent the article on Killarney which I offered to your uncle, and I am afraid it must now be over for one can't write articles with a bright sun and glorious weather tempting one to live out of doors. Pray tell him this, for the offer of the article was mine & he was so kind as accept it. (sic)

I do not like to trouble him about it again, but I wrote to him some weeks since about a new book which I propose to begin when I am quite well again, and I do not know whether he got my note. If he did, I should be very thankful to him for an answer to it at his convenience.

By the last letter I have from India I hear that Tara has been capitally reviewed in the Calcutta Quarterly. Mr. Palmer my father in law says it is the best review and analysis of the book that he has seen, and I hope it will do good and increase the Indian sale. They have been long about noticing Tara from ? ? , but the Calcutta Review is the highest periodical in India and carries much weight with it. Has Tara done anything lately.

My daughters unite with me in kind regards to your mother and sister & also to your uncle & Mrs. Blackwood,

& believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4194, ff. 28-29]

Summer Grove

Near Whitehaven

August 31st, 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Pray accept my sincere thanks for your kind note of the 26th which reached me yesterday from Dublin. If I should receive any considerable offer of advance on our terms for Tara, from any publisher, my necessities, not my inclinations, would induce me to accept it under the purport of your note. The fact is I want to put by for my girls all that I can make by writing, be it much or little, and I share with you the hope that the next book I may be enabled to complete, will answer better than Tara with the novel reading public, and secure of your kind interest in it, I should not feel disposed to accept any but a very considerable advance upon your terms. Be this as it may, I cannot thank you sufficiently for the freedom which you have given me. I have heard nothing since I wrote to you from London and am waiting the alterations which I was told I would receive.

I am glad to say I am much better for the change of air. For a long time past I have suffered from low nervous fever, and consequent depression, and could settle to nothing. I was unable even to write

the Killarney paper to please myself or you, and so gave it up, but I still hope to manage it. I will send it to you if I can. But it is only for the last three or four days that I have felt at all well, and could get rid of the diarrhea which weakened me. I hope I have now turned the corner.

We are with some kind friends here whose hospitable mansion is as full as usual, and we sing a good deal, my girls voices being as tuneful as ever. They unite with me in very kind regards to Mrs. Blackwood & your circle & believe me

My dear Mr. Blackwood

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

I suppose the "Cacherri" paper does not suit you, and Alice petitions, as it was written for her, that if it is not wanted she would be thankful to get it at your convenience. I need not add if it does suit you, that you are most welcome to keep it.

[Ms. 4194, ff. 30-31]

Mitford Castle

Morpeth

Oct. 14th 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

We have been staying here for some days past with my Aunt, and go hence to Mr. Alex Dunsmures in Leith on Saturday, that is tomorrow, where we shall stay a few days. I should be sorry to miss seeing you, and if you would kindly let me know what day you will be in town, I would come up from Leith to see you. Mr. D's home is 8 St. Johns Place, Leith. May I beg a line from you there.

We have been enjoying ourselves verily. I have been waging war against hares & partridges, and today some pheasants are to be bagged I hope, though the woods are not thick yet for shooting. What wonderful weather it is for the seasons.

We write in best regards to Mrs. Blackwood, and believe me

Very sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4194, ff. 32-33]

23 October 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I write just a line to tell you that we reached home safely yesterday afternoon. It blew a gale all night, but our vessel, the Earl of Carlisle, is a noble one, & we did not feel the rough weather at all.

I would have brought the girls to see you had we remained till Monday as we proposed, but Mr. Miller wrote to Alex Dunsmure that he & Mrs. M. must come at once into town for her to corner Prof. Simpson; and as the house would not hold us all, we gave way & departed, as had been our previous intention. Alice too was better, and declared herself able to travel, & I am glad to say the journey has done her no harm. Both beg kind remembrances to you and Mrs. Blackwood, and are sorry not to have seen you. We were glad to find my father very jolly, and he with Mr. Sprig wonderfully glad to see us.

I think in mentioning my cousin Edward Mitfords Tragedy and poems that I forgot to tell you that you will receive them from his brother Major J. P. Mitford of Mitford, or, as he seldom writes, his wife may send them to you. I have now written to her to send all to you as

soon as she can, and to abide by your decision in regard to them.

Edward Mitford is a Ceylon civilian, who occupies his leisure time in writing poetry etc., some of which is pleasant.

Believe me

very sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4194, ff. 34-35]

December 6th 1864

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I enclose a note which I received last evening from a dear old friend Mrs. Hatton of Elm Park, in regard to a translation she has been making of Friedrich Picht's book on "Venice, her Artists and Art Treasures," and at her request, I write to offer it to you. It was in 1839, I think, that she showed me a good deal of her translation of Kuglers work, which she had done, more with the intention of studying the schools of painting herself rather than of publication, but when I gave my decided opinion that what had been so useful to her, would be equally so to thousands, and saw that her part of the work was admirably done, she allowed me to write to old Mr. Murray about it, the end of which was his purchase, I believe of the copyright. Subsequently this translation was edited or enlarged by Sir Charles Eastlake; but her part of the matter remains as it was, and I am sure you know enough of the book to be assured of its good quality.

I have yet to see the chapter she writes she will send me; but I am quite assured that no pains will have been spared upon it, and therefore write at once to you and shall rejoice if I am the means of introducing you to each other, and leaving you to settle any business matters yourselves. You will see that she offered the book first to John Murray, as was natural she should do, and why he has declined it. I am certain that neither he nor any other publisher has seen the translation as yet, and so, if you please you will have the first of it.

My cousin Mrs. Teashhecker writes to me that she sent you Edward Mitford's Tragedy and some poems, & I hope you received them safely - do you think they will suit your purpose?

We all join in kindest regards to Mrs. Blackwood and your family & believe me

Yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Lady Rachel dined with us a few days ago & begged her remembrances "if I should be writing."

1865

[Ms. 4205, ff. 11-14]

2 January 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Lady Rachel kindly sent me your note to her, in which there was a message to me, for which many thanks. I was dining at Drumcindra Castle last night, and asked her to send a reply in return, but was bid to write myself, which I am glad to do because I have two or three things to say.

First - I have only received the papers I wanted for the article on the Land question of India within the last two or three days, or you should have had it sooner. What have been sent from the India Office, are however valuable, being the last minutes of Sir J.

Lawrence & Co. on the issues. I have not even had time to read them but will not delay now.

Secondly -Alice and Amy have been translating lately, what I think some very beautiful Fairy Tales from the German. They were written by Clara von Malsburgh, daughter of a noble count in Hesse Cassel, but were published anonymously. The countess died quite young very soon after they came out, that is about eight years ago, and was a friend of my girls singing mistress who left them the volumes. To my perception they are quite original, and there are passages of singular beauty and poetical conception in them. If Noel Paton would condescend to do it, they would furnish subjects for illustration such as he only could do justice to, and thus a wonderful child's book might be concocted. I am much surprised and gratified by the style of the girls translation. I knew Alice was a good German scholar, but it is the rendering into English that satisfies me as to both. If you would like to see the stories, they shall copy out all or part of the M.S. quite fair, and they would rather you published the book, if it is worth publication, than anyone else. We have my cousin Edgars translation of Grimms Fairy Tales which are celebrated: but to my mind these are much more beautiful -there are three vols. of Clara Malsburgs stories, but of the whole only seventeen are fairy tales, and they are the best.

The girls have 100 pages of translation ready, and the whole will make, they think, a vol. of about 200 pages, what do you say to that?

Thirdly My cousins Mrs. John Mitford and Mr. Teash-hecker are "sitting on my head," about Edward Mitfords tragedy and poems; and though I have resisted troubling you, I should really be grateful to you for a reply to them, or for them; and if you don't approve of either works, and would have the M.S.S. returned to

Mr. Colonel Teash-hecker
3 Rocky Hill Terrace
Maidstone
Kent

I should be profoundly thankful.

Fourthly -How do you like the idea of Mrs. Hutton's proposal?

Fifthly and lastly -We all write in wishing you and Mrs. Blackwood as well as Mr. Williams & his mother & sisters many happy returns of a New Year, & all prosperity & happiness in the present.

Believe me
yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 19-20]

February 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Better late than never perhaps, and I send you by book post the article I promised upon the latest information obtainable, or indeed in existence in regard to the proposed permanent settlement of India. Like your former contributors, who evidently write out of great experience, and like THB in Fraser, I oppose this settlement: but as I mentioned to you in Edinburgh, neither writer gives more than arguments against the measures often stated before, though in both these ? with new force. In this paper, therefore, I have endeavoured to explain new grounds, derived from the latest government minutes on the subject with which a kind friend at the India Office has supplied me. Why, even the most forward provinces in the Bengal Presidency are unfit for any finite measure. All the rest of India being, by the Viceroys showing, quite below his

standard. The only thing wanting in illustration is a reference to a part of Kayes History, and this, as I have not the book in the house, I could apply when the M.S. is in type.

I trust the article is not too long, but after many curtailments, even indeed rewriting it, I could make no further reduction. If however it is too long, or it is not otherwise approved of, please let me have it back. I will not however anticipate such doom!

If you can kindly give me replies, 1st about Edward Mitfords MS and secondly about Mrs. Hattons book I shall be very grateful. Of the first I know nothing, of the second I am sure from her elegant style of translation and critical mind, that it is as good in its way as Kuglers book was, or she would never have taken it up.

Remember I have two ladies "sitting upon my head" as Easterners say. Four indeed if I include Alice & Amy, who join me in kindest regards to you all, and say "O if you are writing to Mr. Blackwood, do ask him about the fairy stories" and, so it is done!

believe me

yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D5, p. 272-273]

Edinburgh Feb. 14, 1865

My dear Captain Taylor

I feel very much ashamed of my long silence and much obliged by the pleasant good nature with which you always write in spite of my misdemeanours as a correspondent.

First, as to Mrs. Hutton's proposal. I have no doubt her translations of the German Artists Venice etc. from what she says will be a good book and a creditable one to publish but I have been so unfortunate with translations that I am not disposed to this one altho' I should have liked to accede to your friendly proposition.

I am sorry to say also, that I cannot do anything with Mr. Mitfords tragedy & poems, and have desired the M.S.S to be returned to the address you give.

Give my best regards to your young ladies, and say I am very anxious to undertake the publication of their translation of those German Fairy Tales, and will do so if I see anything like a chance of our having a successful little adventure together. The best plan will be to send a specimen Tale or two, with the title you propose for the collection. Illustrations are desirable for such a book but it is difficult to get them good -Noel Paton is hopeless. He kept us waiting seven years for the illustrations to Asterius Lays.

As my space for next No. of Magazine is more than filled up I have not yet read your paper on the Indian Land Settlement, which I expect to find very good. It is not easy, however, to find room for so long a paper on a subject, -which, important as it is, cannot be considered popular, and is not likely to find many readers. Our best chance would be if we could time it before some debate in the House on the Question and get some mention there. I generally find however that the fellows steal wholesale, and never mention the source of their inspiration.

We have frost and snow here still, but are pretty well, and I hope the young ladies and you are equally so. We have had some private theatricals lately -a tremendous success. My brother Major B. was the ringleader and came out a perfect artist. The piece was Woodcock's Little Game, and if you want anything of the kind at Harold's Cross or Druncindra get it from London, as it is admirably adapted for a drawing room performance. Give my remembrances to Lady

Rachel when you see her, and believe me, always yours sincerely
(signed) John Blackwood

[Ms. 4205, ff. 15-18]

21st Feb. 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

In the first place pray accept my best thanks upon deliverance from the importunities of two ladies. My cousin Marianne is delighted to get back her brothers Tragedy, and Mrs. Hatton is ? to offer her translation elsewhere as she thinks best.

My cousin however mentions that "ten leaves of short poems" which were sent with, or after the Tragedy, were not returned with it, and she begs me to write to you once more, as she has no other copy. I am going to write to her when I have finished this, to tell her that I am sure she will receive them.

And now I beg to offer you Alice & Amys best thanks for your kind message. They are very proud indeed at the idea of the chance of having any little adventure with you, and I need not say how I shall rejoice if you like what they have done. I send you three stories today: and it would a good deal depend upon your ideas of how long the book should be, (supposing it will do at all) whether they translated more of the stories than they have already completed. Those finished, which are being fairly written out are,

- 1 Carl the Curious, which includes
The Finches Story (very pretty)
The Horses Story
The Chafers Wedding (delightful)
- 2 The Lost Thimble
- 3 Princess Wonderful

Alice thinks these will be a little more in bulk than what is now sent, and that there may be 150 to 160 pages of the same size altogether.

There are three volumes of the stories in the original German; but some of them are dull, others full of trite morality and the girls have selected those which are most poetical, & say there are a few more, perhaps 200 pages in all, or at most 250. That is if the selection is continued; but the original volumes are about 190 pages each, small ? and close German print.

I have read over these translations but have not altered a word. I would much rather you judged of the girls own simple style; to me it appears very hale & graceful, and not Germanized: but of course I am partial, and all that I have done is to put into English case what was in German, as nearly and as close to the spirit and meaning of the original as I could. In the Chafers Wedding and the Finches story there are perhaps more bits of verse than in the others, and one in the wedding, a song by the Elves, is especially fanciful.

Now as to illustrations. If you have no one in your eye, I could get my friend Jones, RHA, a very clever artist and excellent draftsman, to do them. He has been long wishing to do a book and having asked him the question he authorized me, on Sunday to name him to you. Jones is our best portrait artist in water colours, and has extensive practice, but he never allows a season to pass without original pictures in oil or water colour, which are popular.

If you like the stories, and have a mind to let him try, I don't think he would disappoint you. He & his good wife are very fond of us, and he would go into the matter con amore and make the drawings in pen and ink which could be traced and transformed to stone, or cut upon wood.

I shall be much obliged for your answer about Jones whenever you can conveniently give it; for as the rough copy of the MS is here, Alice could give it to him to read, and see what he proposes to make pictures of.

If the article on the land tax will do, pray suit your own convenience in putting it into Maga. I have had [a] good many other papers sent me from the I.O. and what is necessary can be altered, deducted, or added when the proofs come, that is, if they come. We all write in kindest regards & believe me

yours most truly

Meadows Taylor

Your message was duly delivered to Lady Rachel whom we met on Friday night at the Castle Ball.

Is Tara doing anything? I ask because our librarian, Mr. Morrow told me, "It was so much more asked for & read than it was at first."

[Ms. 4205, ff. 21-22]

10 April 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

After I sent you the M.S. of the Indian article, I received from the India Office some other papers of consequence in regard to the subject, on which I proposed to modify a few passages in my article when it should be in type, that is if it were to be so at all. Now I have already kept these documents sometime and they are wanted but if there is any chance of the article being set up, I would detain them giving my reason which would be accepted I hope. I saw a note of a motion on this very subject lately in the H. of L. which is deferred till after Easter. I have no doubt it will come up soon afterwards, and I have not the least objection to my information being used there, if you have none. Indeed it was with a view of making the subject as plain as possible that I wrote at all, & I believe it to be of the greatest importance to India generally, and perhaps very little understood here in the popular view of the people there.

I had a note from Mr. Simpson in which he said you are in London, so I send this in the hope it may find you.

The young ladies join me in very kind regards, and believe me,

yours very sincerely,

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 23-24]

17th June 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have enough of the new story ready to enable you to judge as to whether you like it. I can send you the whole of Vol. I, and up to Chapt. XIX of Vol. II, and three more chapters will end that volume, which I will get through in a few days more.

If I had not had interruptions the book would have been finished by this time; but the Executive Council and Indian department of our Exhibition literally absorbed a month; and then, Amy felt so ill that I had no heart to write. She was attacked by a dangerous congestive fever and is not by any means so strong as I could wish her; but I am thankful to say she is improving.

The name of the new book is Ralph Darnell. The scene begins in London, time 1755, changes to Northumberland, on the Cogness Warksworth etc. (I can write Northumbrian and speak it when I'm there.) Back to London. Then changes to India, bringing in Suraj oo Doulah, and his doings against the English (but there is no dry history) and Chapt. XIX of Vol. II is about the Black Hole and who

was in it. The action will remain in India in at least half of Vol. III after the Battle of Plassey, and will end in England.

I considered the story a good deal before I began it, and wrote a synopsis of every chapter in each volume, to which I have adhered as nearly as I could; but I am not going to tell you what it is about. I would rather you went quite fresh to it. My own private opinion, (which you need not care about) is, that it would suit as a serial for *Maga*, because there is so much incident in it, not of a usual kind still.

I have not heard from you for an age, but hope all goes well with you and yours. Does that Indian article I sent you, promise to be of any use to you? At present the subject of it is the most interesting in India, but that perhaps you don't care about. If you do not want it however please return the M.S. to me.

And my young ladies present their compliments, and want to know how they have offended Mr. Blackwood, and whether their translation of the pretty German Fairy tales has any chance of finding favour in his eyes?

And only Mr. Blackwood can answer these questions!

I suppose you are at Strathtyrum by this time enjoying this tropical climate. It is almost too hot at times, but we have enough country about us to keep the air fresh, with our kindest regards to Mrs. Blackwoods and all your family, believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 25-26]

Bellegrove

Lucens County

near Monasterevan

23 June 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

A few days ago, since I last wrote to you, I received a note from my cousin Mrs. Austin, begging me to write a review of her daughter Lady Duff Gordons Letters from Egypt especially for your magazine, and as I happened to have the book in the house, I began at once the day before yesterday, and this being a very quiet country house, have finished what remained to be done today.

Before I had any idea of reviewing it, I had read my cousins book with great pleasure, it is so true, so vivid & so unaffected: but I should not have attempted a review except after Mrs. Austins expressed wish for you: indeed had no idea of noticing it at all.

If however what I have sent you with this, prove acceptable, her desire will have been attained, and our united thanks will attend upon you.

We have come out to this lovely place chiefly on Amys account, who though better was not getting strong. I was glad to see that she bore the journey nicely, and has been able to get about the park and grounds more than I expected today.

We all unite in best regards and believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Bellegrove

Monasterevan

Lucens County

29th June 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I feel as if I were a great trouble to you, but you must kindly pardon this one more note.

Mr. Froude, the editor of Fraser, asks me for a review of Lady Duff Gordons book for his August number. Now if you have no place for the one I sent you a few days ago, or do not like it, will you be so very kind as return it to me, and I will send it over to him. But if it will answer your purposes, I should be much gratified if you would take it, for I can easily write another for Mr. Froude. I will wait a few days in the hope of hearing from you, and will wait till I get home again to begin another, in case that should be necessary: and a line from you will decide the point.

I am rejoiced to tell you that the change of air is doing wonders for Amy who is beginning to feel and to look like herself again, after her long weakness. With kindest regards

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Mr. Froudes note only reached me yesterday afternoon.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 29-30

July 8th 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Very many thanks for yours of 4th which I was glad to find on my return home yesterday evening from Bellegrave. I am thankful to tell you and Mrs. Blackwood that Amy arrived very decided here fit for the change, & we would have remained with our hospitable host longer, only that we expected my father home today, and could not prolong our absence. Amy is a very different creature now to what she was when we took her out, though there is still room for improvement in condition.

The M.S. came safely & I shall send it to Mr. Froude who, for all I know to the contrary, may think as you do: but I confess to have been charmed by the easy, and entirely genuine character of the book, which I think you will enjoy when you read it. I have no doubt that Mrs. Austin has done all 'possible' to get the book noticed and I do not know anybody more indefatigable when she has an object. I thought she might have written to you before she suggested me to send you an article, and with her, I have only 'to hear & to obey.'

The young ladies are sorry (of course) about the Fairy Tales. They would so have liked to have done something for you, but I tell them not to despair and they may perhaps please you some day. Will you be so kind as direct the M.S. to be returned to them.

May I send you the M.S. of Ralph Darnell? It is ready for you as far as Chap. XIX of Vol. II and I can finish the volume in a week or so. Amys long illness, and absence, has put me off writing, except reviews & magazine articles, or I should have finished the book before this.

Or would you prefer waiting till it is all complete. Just as you please. I will work as fast as I can, but please let me know.

One more matter, & I have done. Will the article on the Land Settlement of India suit.

If not please send it back to me, but I confess to a great desire to see it in Maga, because the subject was part canvassed there before, as you know. However, just as you please.

We are invited by the Dunsmures to the Trossachs for a month, and should like to go vastly but can't see our way just yet. I will, however, let you know what we decide. We have had some rain, which

was needed everywhere, but not enough as yet. Much ? having gone but otherwise capital. With our best regards to Mrs. Blackwood & yourself, we are

always
yours truly
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 31-32]

July 29th 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have just finished Chap. V of the 3d vol. of Ralph Darnell, and have lately reread & corrected the whole of Volumes I & II, so that they are quite ready for press: and I should like, if I may to send them to you at once, for if you like to take the book on the terms you before mentioned, you could begin printing it as soon as you please.

I can send the M.S. by the Globe Express dispatch as soon as I have the pleasure of hearing from you, and shall be immensely obliged by a line when you can send me one in reply to this.

I don't expect the conclusion would take me very long, certainly not a month if I am not disturbed. In any case I would work hard to get the matter off my mind, and if you like, I could send you a sketch of what the end will be.

You will find this book very different to Tara, necessarily so, and yet, as near as I can make it a true picture of times & doings in 1755/57.

I am afraid I am a sad trouble to you. Mais que faire? I shall be very happy when I am out of suspense.

You will all be enjoying the country and unlimited golf this glorious weather. I am glad & thankful to tell you & Mrs. Blackwood that Amy is much better and stronger. We all join in kindest regards & believe me

Yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 33-34]

10 August [1865]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I found the enclosed matter among some old notes, and send it, because you may like to see the opinion of one of the leading critics of London who will have to review Ralph Darnell whenever it may appear, on an early ? of my work. I have known the writer since she was a child which will account to you for the style.

I hope the Tale has gathered strength as it has increased in volume. One or two of the alterations suggested I was able to make. I am now writing chapt. XVI of Vol. III which will be completed this afternoon, and another ten days at most will finish the book.

Can you kindly put me out of suspense, in matters of this kind I am apt to ?, and so I cry pardon for what I can't help.

I know you have lately had a great loss, in a dear friend. I did not know him, but the loss of a long tried companion like Mr. Aytoun is one of those chasms as it were in ones life, which is never filled up.

Believe me
with all our kindest regards to your circle
yours most sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 35-36]

17th August 1865

My dear Mr. William

I do not like to trouble your uncle, but if you will kindly tell him that I finished 'Ralph Darnell history' yesterday afternoon, I shall be thankful. My daughters are reading Vol. III to find out any mistakes there may be, but the whole will be ready to send by the time I receive a reply, if indeed your uncle wishes to see it: but I should ? he did not, because I think he might like it better than Tara.

Pray kindly let me know and with all our kind regards believe me
yours sincerely

Meadows Taylor

William Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 37-38]

August 19th 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I cannot tell you how glad I was to receive your kind note last night, which has relieved me from all uncertainty. I was afraid Tara had not answered well enough to tempt you with me: and was anticipating if you would not have Ralph Darnell, a dreary canvas among London publishers -but all that is at an end, and you shall have the M.S. of Vol. I by the Globe Express dispatch on Monday. (My brother Robert has come from Hunmanby and is reading it), and the other volumes shall follow as he gets through them.

Please bear in mind, that if you don't like Ralph, you are not to take him. He is not Tara, but perhaps he is more after the taste of the million of novel readers, and their sympathies will be more with him, than with Tara. At least I think so, and so my household critics say.

I sometimes think it would make a better serial than an entire publication & there is plenty of incident in it both in England and in India. But I need not say more, you will know exactly what it is fit for, when you have read it. The MS has been read over carefully, as carefully as MS ever can be; and there is nothing to alter that cannot be better done in proofs. The printer must cast up some sheets and see how they will compose; but I have hoped to keep a page of writing and a page of printing pretty nearly together. I don't think much can be curtailed & cut out as was the case with Tara: but you can tell this when you read.

I sympathize with you most truly in Mr. Aytouns death. I have felt what a very close fellow to you such a man must have been, and I believe literary friendships to be the closest as they are the most intellectual. I have not seen Lady Rachel lately, but I am quite sure she grieves over your loss very sincerely, & I will give, or write your message. My girls are well & send their kindest regards to you & Mrs. Blackwood

Meadows Taylor

I don't mind telling you, but my critic & correspondent is Mrs. Cashel Hoey, a lady you ought to know, for she is a very graceful writer & reviewer. I have known her since she was a child.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 39-40]

25 August 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I dispatch Vol. II today by the Globe Express & hope you have recd. Vol. I safely.

Vol. III will follow in a day or two. My brother Robert is just near the end, and approves, and I have to send it to Mrs. Hoey my critic, who begs much to see the end, & I cant refues her, but she is use to reading fast, and will get through the volume in a day.

My cousin John Edward Taylor writes about printing the book

"Of course I should be very thankful to have it, and am very desirous to try for it. I believe I could now meet Mr. Blackwoods requirements in every way. I have plenty of type out of case. If you would kindly write a line I would afterwards call on him. His objection before was only that I could not then, print quickly enough, or keep the work in type. I can now, I believe do everything he requires, and put 20 hands upon the composition."

I shall write to him that I have extracted part of his note and sent it to you, and recommend him to write to you. I don't know how far employing him suits your views, but if it will do so, I am sure the work will be well done.

I delivered your message to Lady Rachel, & Alice & I are going there to dine today, to meet Sothern & go to see him in David Garrick afterwards.

With all our kindest regards

Believe me

Always sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

P.S. I think it will be better to keep the Christian name Ralph, all through to the end & I will alter Robert to Ralph in the proofs.

MT

[Ms. 4205, ff. 41-42]

3d Sept. 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

You will be thinking me remiss perhaps because I have not sent you the 3d vol. of Ralph; but my brother only finished it last Monday, and I had promised Mrs. Hoey that she should read it. Her reply has come this morning from Newby where she is staying, and I send it to you: not to influence you one way or other, but to show you what she writes, whose reviews of many of your best publications, you may remember and I know, for she is just like one of my daughters, that she would not spare me if there were occasions to find fault.

I have told her how & why I can't bring the character she likes, Noor ool Nissah more prominently forward; but I can supply something more than there is at present, and I think with advantage, a few pages will suffice. I shall not get the MS till Tuesday from Newby, and will make the additions and send it to you as soon as I can, certainly, in all the week.

Believe me

Yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

Hope the two of the parcels have reached you safely.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 43-44]

7th Sept. 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I send you today by the Globe Express the third volume of Ralph Darnell. I only received it on Monday, and have been looking over it & have made some additions to Chap. XX, which I think supplies what Mrs. Hoey thought was wanting, and I hope you will approve of the story.

What I have made the ending I remember to have read somewhere of

an old Indian officer who lived a secluded life in a house near Kensington, and I thought such an ending would not be inappropriate to a life like Ralphs.

I think it will be better to change his name from Robert Daunton, to Ralph Smithson his mothers, and I will alter it wherever it occurs by and large.

We have almost more than summer heat again, for the last few days, and I hope you & yours are enjoying the same.

With our very kind regards believe me

very sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D5, p. 371]

Sept. 11th 1865

My Dear Colonel Taylor

I liked what I saw of your cousin, Mr. J.E. Taylor, and my only objection to his printing the work is that we are printers ourselves, but if you care much about it, let him have the printing. If he did, I would send him a memo of what we charged ourselves for the printing of Tara as a guide in regard to prices.

I have not yet been able to go at the M.S. and I think I shall take it in proof, as I have perfect confidence that you will always write like a man of sense.

(signed) JB

[Ms. 4205, ff. 45-46]

12 Sept. 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have no other thought, I spare you, about the printing of the book than that you should suit your own convenience in all respects. If my cousin can satisfy your requirements as to time, type, and terms, I on my part can only answer for his doing his work well; and so leave the question of decision entirely in your own hands. I would not indeed have mentioned the matter at all, but for what he wrote, that he would be glad to have the work as he was slack, and so I wrote to you.

I thank you heartily, most heartily, for your confidence in regard to the book, & I most sincerely trust you may not be disappointed in it -was there ever a publisher like you who would so far trust to his author as to read his book only in the proofs! I cannot imagine a higher encouragement, or compliment, and so -make my bow.

The article on Lady Gordons book which you saw, will be in Fraser for October. I corrected the proofs on Saturday. I have besides in the Edinburgh of October, an article, partly descriptive, partly antiquarian upon the Buddhist cave temples of India which may possibly interest you.

The woodcuts (64) of a paper of mine in the transactions of the Royal Irish Academy upon Cairns, Cromlechs, etc., etc., in the Deccan, are at last finished, and I have been arranging them with the letter press. As the subject may interest some of your antiquarians, I shall be glad to send copies to any friends you may please to name. Professor Simpson will of course get one and Dr. Greville; but can you (at your leisure) mention any others?

With our kindest regards to Mrs. Blackwood, believe me

very sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 47-48]

22 Sept. 1865

My dear Mr. William

Your uncle will be at Strathtyrum; but I daresay this will find you at the office, and I do not like to trouble him. I write to ask you to be so very kind as forward to me, the manuscripts of the translation of the German Fairy Tales by my daughters, which your uncle wrote to me a long time ago, were not quite up to his mark; and also the manuscripts of an article upon the Indian Land Tax (if indeed it will not answer either) which I wrote for the magazine. I dare say both are in the office, and I therefore trouble you.

In the 3d volume of Ralph Darnell, is a chapter of which I forget the number, entitled the Nawabs Last March, or something of the kind, & I should like to see it again before it goes to press. My friendly critic Mrs. Hoey was with me yesterday, and thought that by working it up a little more, I could improve it considerably; and I think I might. She said, "I knew what was in your mind, but others may be duller." My impression is that I did not wish to make it too sensational, but that is no reason why it should be any way weak. Could you kindly include it in the parcel. Is anything settled about the printing of Ralph Darnell?

In reference to the Indian article, I can only say that I should be truly delighted if it would answer: but if it will not, I have no more to say, except that I would try and make use of it otherwise, for I may say it cost me a good deal of labour, and reading of the books, and official unpublished papers which were lent me from the India Office.

We hope you are all well, and with our kindest regards believe me
yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

William Blackwood Esq.

(note on side of folio 47: I have got items GS)

[Ms. 4205, ff. 49-50]

4th October 1865

My dear Mr. William

I have received the proofs and your kind note. Many thanks for all. I will get the proofs done today if I can. If not, tomorrow. The type is beautiful and I am glad my old friends the compositors, to whom my compliments, have Ralph in hand. I don't think they would have forgiven me if the work had gone out of their hands.

I am happy you approve so far, and hope you will find the interest increase. I have had little need to invent scenes when the facts of history were so dramatic and forceful.

I wrote the Indian article for the Maga especially because of a former article which went partly into the matter but not deep enough, and I got from the India Office all the last minutes of council & correspondence which are just published, and I was given them only because I advocated the cause of the people, which theorists are disposed to run down.

I only mention this to show I did not write without good data; for the rest, let the article be judged on its own merits.

The MS of the Fairy Tales arrived quite right thank you & with the kind regards of my young ladies to your mother & sister & yourself

believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

I hope you will not spare me in R.D. if you have occasion to notice any passages.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 51-52]

11th October 1865

My dear Mr. Blackwood

When the M.S. was being read to my father, as it was written, he too remonstrated at the occasional explosions: but afterwards, recollecting what genteel society was in his young days, (he is 87), thought I had not overdone them. I then got the Virginians which is very nearly the same period as R.D., and looked on what Thackeray had written in the same line, and found I was within the mark, and I therefore let what I had written remain. This is only to explain why there is any of it and I shall have great pleasure on toning down what there is. One need not give offence, even to the most sensitive of ones readers, on a point of obsolete custom.

I cannot look at the revises today, as I have a portrait of my eldest daughter in a state which must be gone on with: but you shall have all back by tomorrows post. My very diligent secretaries too are going out to lunch, and, they will allow nothing to go away without their examination!!

Nancy Reeves dialect is Northumbrian and I hope good. It is my mother tongue & I have never forgotten it. Dear old Nanny is still alive, and lives in the lodge at Twizell. She is very proud at being "fit intil a baik."

I am glad you like what you have read, and hope you will find the interest improves as you go on. I shall be glad to know your uncles opinion by and bye. There is necessarily much more action in the Indian portion than in the English and I have followed history very closely.

I enclose a note from Mr. Williams, Williams & Norgate, and shall be thankful if you will do the needful when the time comes.

We had a heavy thunderstorm last night & the best display I have seen & heard since I left India: but today is very fine calm, and very pleasant.

With our kindest regards to your circle, believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

I have omitted to say that the title page & dedications are excellent & I quite approve of them.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 53-54]

23d October 1865

My dear Mr. William

I send you by book post the chapter XII of Vol. III which I wished to alter. I have rewritten it, and I think strengthened it materially as regards the "Nawabs last march." At least the household critics say so, and I depend on them a good deal. Chapter XII is enlarged by 9 pages in consequence, but this will not be so much of print, as I have written some of it more openly than usual. I think however the chapter will be better divided; and I have made a note in the margin, at the point where the subject changes in some respect, & where a break could be made. Thus Chapt. XII would stand; the rest from the break, would be Chapt. XIII. XIII would become chapt. XIV and so on to the end. Will you kindly give the needful orders?

Where are the proofs? They came at first so fast that I was in great hope the book would be complete, and a copy available for my father before he went to Bath. He does not know it is dedicated to

him; and I wanted to contrive a little surprize (sic) for him which I know would be a great pleasure, but I am afraid this can't be managed now, as I don't think I could keep him from his winter retreat at Bath longer than the middle of November. What do you think? We are all at home willing to work at proofs all day long!

I am longing to hear whether your uncle approves of Mr. Ralph, & whether he likes the Indian scenes. We unite in very kind regards to your mother & sister & believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

I have been made a J.P. and received my commission last week from the Lord Chancellor.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 55-56]

28th October 1865

My dear Mr. William

I am very glad you like the Indian portion of the book. It was not without much consideration that I began the English portion of it; and that too only in deference to the public taste. I only hope I may not have them wrong: but there is necessarily much more force and picturesqueness in Indian scenes & character if the public would only take the trouble to think so! But we shall see. I hope you will find the interest & power increase as you get on: for I purposely kept back my ammunition, to fire a volley now & then with (I hope) effect.

I will keep down the Indian names, as far as possible. In the last proof for instance, in the scene in the Nawabs Durbar, the word Moulvee is introduced, for which after the first time, Priest might be introduced, but I had better alter in the revises. If you read the proofs before they come, will you kindly put a pencil mark at any Indian word you think might be omitted? They come so natural to me that I don't notice them as much as I ought.

I would almost rather that your Uncle did not read Ralph till the Indian scenes are well in: but I shall be very glad to have his opinion at any time.

About the binding -the old colour was very pretty, and a little difference in decoration on the back would mark the difference between Ralph and Tara. My daughters have however a great idea of green the shade in which Mr. Patersons volume of essays is bound, which is very pretty: and if you agree with them, let it be green by all means. If however, there is any difficulty the Tara colour will answer very well. With our kindest regards believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

P.S. We are to have a grand ball in the Exhibition Building on the 10th November, the day after it closes. Nothing of course will be removed and the whole place will be lighted up, etc. Can we tempt you over? It is an easy run via Glasgow & the steamers are capital. We have a room for you in the old house, & shall be delighted to see you if you will come.

MT

[Ms. 4205, ff. 57-58]

30th October 1865

As well as I remember there is not a great deal of Vol. II after the Black Hole, the proof of which I have just corrected, (I hope you liked the scene!) and the M.S. has not run to so much in print as I expected. If therefore Vol. II, as it stands, is anyway short in

quantity, I think a chapter or two might be taken from Vol. III, which originally was longer than Vol. II. The third vol. might even begin with Ralphs arrival in England, and in any case Mrs. Whartons story perhaps belongs better to the 2nd vol. than the 1st [should be 3d].

Will you kindly look to this matter and oblige me? It always looks better I think when the volumes are pretty nearly the same size.

I return the proofs & revises by the post. Believe me
very sincerely yours
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 59-60]
November 3d 1865

My dear Mr. William

We are all so sorry to hear that you can't come over to the Ball; but it can't be helped. Should anything occur to alter your resolution, you will find your room all ready for you.

Well done -printers. We are getting on capitally now. My father promises to stay if I don't keep him too long, and I am sure you will kindly have a set bound up for him & dispatched as soon as all is printed off. It is because of the dedication which he knows nothing about yet that I want to give R.D. into his own hands.

I am so glad you like the end of Vol. II and that you have not read the M.S. -and I say the same of your uncle also. I am longing to hear his opinion. But altogether I am not so anxious about this as I was about Tara & though this is not Tara, it is perhaps a tale for which there may be more sympathy among the public.

A friend sent me a very civil message from Hepworth Dixon the other day about Tara, & I was glad to think she was not forgotten, even by the critics!

With our bery kind regards to your circle & to your uncle believe me

Always sincerely yours
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 61-62]
11th November 1865

My dear Mr. William

We were rejoiced yesterday, to see the wonderful exertions that your people had made, and we all worked hard and dispatched every proof & revise we had. I have just corrected the two last sheets, and as I have to go to town will make over the revises to the young ladies till I come back. They have helped me in this book far more if possible than they did in Tara, and are capital detectors of ungraceful bits, repetitions & so forth which will occur.

I am delighted to hear you like Ralph and am longing for your uncles opinion very much. No, it is not Tara I know -and Miss Amy is particularly incorrigible upon this point. I had been planning Tara for twenty years & more since I talked over it with Prof. Wilson in your round room, and at a memorable breakfast with him which I don't forget -& I could not write a book like Tara, unless I could go again among my old folk. I only hope I have done my possible with Ralph Darnell, & perhaps he may secure more sympathy with the public at large than the little Brahmin girl of whom I was so fond.

The last scene, and the scene in Lucker Church, took my folks aback. They could not believe but that 'Rraafe wd. be Bazzull after aall'; that however would have made the end very conventional, and

not I thought so needful, or so natural as the other. I hope your uncle thinks me right. The final scene I remember to have read somewhere, & it always made a great impression on me: Mr. Tinsley says I am right as to the fact, & has promised me the exact detail, though I did not tell him what use I had made of it.

Never did a book go through the press easier & more pleasurably to me than this, & to you & your people I hope the same. Has the story interested the press men as Tara did. Not so much perhaps. My best thanks to all of them for their care & patience.

I shall be thankful for a complete copy as soon as you can send one, for my father who waits for it. I would rather the first copy sent were complete, if possible. I am only anxious because I have dedicated the tale to him, & he has always from the first had more interest in it, than in Tara. He says he understands it better, and others may be like him.

I see one advertisement in ? and I trust there will be a good subscription. The reviewer of the Morning Post wants a copy before publication, in order to have a "grand" review ready for that event & I will send the address if there is no objection.

We had a capital ball last night. The ladies danced 19 dances out of 20, and we broke off at 5 am. It was a great success, and your absence was much lamented. With all our best regards

ever yours sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 63-64]

15 November 1865

My dear Mr. William

You will have all the revises of Ralph Darnell before this; and I am glad we are able to get through them so soon.

I am anxious to have three early copies, one for Lady Wodehouse, one for Lady Rachel Butler & one for another kind friend who is very anxious to have one, as he has been much interested in the progress of the book. My father would leave us on Monday next if the copy for him came: and I am sure you will kindly further it as soon as you conveniently can.

I hope your uncle has read it all. Your note was a very sincere gratification to me, for I have been anxious of course as to what you would think. The end is, as I think I have told you a fact, but allowable under the circumstances of the case. I was looking into Mrs. Oliphants Agnes this morning, & it struck me that I have complied unwittingly with some of the conditions she very clearly sets forth in her preface, to which I refer you.

Excuse a rushed note, but I am obliged to go to the exhn. to help to forward our Indian collection to your forthcoming Exhibition. I think you will be gratified by it.

With all our best regards
Yours most sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 65-66]

18th November [1865]

My dear Mr. William

The specimen copy of Ralph and your letter arrived together by last night's post and gave us great pleasure. The binding is just what we wished for, and very pretty & simple. All that I venture to suggest is, that my name should be put on the back just under the words Ralph Darnell, and perhaps this can be contrived. It is on the

back of Tara; and I see that on several novels in the house, the writers name is similarly placed. This is all.

If we had the other two volumes this copy would answer capitally for my father, and if in reference to my last note which you will have received before this reaches you, you will be able to dispatch them, I shall receive them before Tuesday the day he wishes to leave, and if I hear from you that they will not be ready before say the middle of the week I am sure he would put off going till Friday which is the latest day he could remain with convenience to himself.

The other copies at your own convenience. I cannot send the list of all today, as I am obliged to go to the Exhibition immediately on business, but I will make out a list as soon as possible and forward it. The only copies I care about sending before publication are the three I mentioned in my last, Lady Rachels etc.

I wrote yesterday about the Posts copy, and will let you know directly I get a reply; as the sheets will be in London, I suppose one set of the book could be sent if necessary. I know the writer of the Review, to be, wd. like to have one ready as soon as possible, but too much haste might evince preference, for which there is no occasion.

I am thankul to all your men for their interest in Ralph, and so we may all hope that he may succeed in the world.

With our kindest regards
yours most sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 67-68]

20th November 1865

My dear Mr. William

I received your note yesterday and am much obliged to you for writing, as it decided me on giving the specimen copy to my father, and putting him out of suspense about his departure. He was greatly delighted and gratified by the book being dedicated to him, and in his simple hearted fashion much moved by it. From the first he has been greatly interested in Ralph, more so than in Tara, because as he said he could understand it better.

When it can be managed conveniently will you kindly order a complete copy to be sent to him-

P.M. Taylor Esq.
1 Leymour Street
Bath

where he will remain for some time. I will send a list of other copies by & bye.

I hope you will have received my note about the binding. If not I may as well mention again that the insertion of "Meadows Taylor" below the title in the back is all that the "House committee" begs for, and that too only if it can be effected without inconvenience.

I am delighted with "Agnes" which I have been reading, & I can't read Running the Gauntlet which some folks rave about!

Ever yours sincerely
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 69-70]

22d November 1865

My dear Mr. William

Many many thanks to you for all the trouble you have so kindly taken about the copy of Ralph. You will have received I trust, my note which I wrote after I had given the 1st vol. to my father, and

at your entire convenience, a copy complete, can be sent to him no. 1 Leymour Street Bath. He has taken the specimen volume with him, and I don't think anything I ever did for him in my life, has gratified & pleased him more than that little dedication to him. He has been full of it ever since, and shows it -privately- to friends with an immense condition of delight. He left us this morning by the early boat for Bath, and I fear has had a rough passage to Holyhead: but as he does not mind a rough sea, he will get over famously I have no doubt.

Mr. Morrow, our "Mudie", who is a great ally of mine, begged yesterday for a very early copy, as he has influence with the press of Dublin, and will get the book well reviewed, and I have promised that he shall have one. Could therefore four early copies be sent instead of three? There is no hurry about the rest, & I have not heard from the Posts reviewer -when I do hear I will let you know.

We have had wonderful weather here also, almost like summer for mildness, but a gale of wind has brought up the rain, and I suppose we must be ready for a change.

When my turn comes I shall be delighted to hear from your uncle. Meanwhile I hope he is winning no end of golf matches.

with our kind regards

Yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 71-72]

25 November 1865

My dear Mr. William

I enclose herewith six labels to be pasted into as many copies of Ralph, and the addresses are upon the slips round them, by which they can be forwarded. Will you kindly direct this to be done, either from London, or from your own office as may be most convenient, and much oblige me.

I enclose a list of the copies I wish to give, and you will see by it how they are to be disposed of. I should like the copy for Mr. Reeve to be sent as soon as convenient, as my cousins are very anxious to see the new book, and may leave a notice in the Edinburgh.

I am going to London on a short visit to him which I have long promised, and hope to be with him -62 Rutland Gate, Knightsbridge, S.W. on Monday morning the 4th or evening as it may be. I shall stay there for a fortnight. Will you kindly accredit me to your manager in Paternoster Row, and tell me his name for I quite forget it.

The copies for India will be underweight if each volume be separately done up, and will go quite safely.

Mr. Simpson will please keep an acct. of postage, packing or other charges against me as before.

The editor of the Bombay Saturday Review would have R.D. well reviewed in Bombay, if you would kindly send him a copy by bookpost, and perhaps it would be advisable to send a copy to one of the leading papers in Calcutta & Madras.

This I think is all the bother I have to give you this time. Please forgive it & believe me

Most sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

Could you kindly ascertain about the Indian Article for me? If not wanted I would try & get it in somewhere in London, but I would rather of course have it in Maga, if it be worth acceptance for any other place, it must be rewritten and if not wanted, you might be

able to send it to London in one of your parcels, oor to me here before next Saturday.

[Ms. 4205, ff. 73]

2nd December!! [1865]

My dear Mr. William

How I came to be so very stupid I don't know, but I put London on the envelope to my note of 25th Nov. and it has only reached me today from the dead letter office! A thousand pardons.

Not indeed that it signifies much as you will have copies of Ralph I daresay before this reaches you, and Mr. Simpson will I am sure kindly look to the copies being sent as noted. I have not received the copies I wanted first, those for Lady Wodehouse etc., but all in good time. They can be sent on by my daughters when they arrive.

I go to London tomorrow evening, and shall be at 62 Rutland Gate for a fortnight.

With all our kindest regards believe me

Yours most sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4205, ff. 74-75]

Rutland Gate

London

December 17th 1865

My dear Mr. William

I would have answered your note before, but waited up to yesterday in hope of being able to send you some critique upon Ralph Darnell. None however that I know of has appeared. I met Mr. Townsend one of the editors of the Spectator at dinner the other day (Wednesday) who told me he hoped to have an article ready by Saturday, but there is none. He was one of Tara's best supporters, and does not think Ralph so grand; but he had no complaint to make, and said what I may repeat to you, that he thought the writing much more beautiful and touching, & some of the Indian scenes all he could wish.

I cannot imagine why the substn. is so small & I cannot help thinking from a remark which fell from Mr. Tinsley whom I visited on behalf of poor Carleton of Dublin, that there is some combination among the libraries on account of price. -I went to the office on Friday to ask about this, but Mr. Langford was out. I will however see him before I leave town which will be on 22d at latest. Have you ever suspected such a thing yourselves?

I am very sorry to hear about the article because it was wanted by my cousin for the Edinburgh very much, and with a little modification would have suited him. So I hope it may turn up yet, and I beg you to be so kind as have search made for it. If it is gone I fear I should hardly be able to get the information contained in it again from the India Office, and having no copy, should be obliged to rewrite the whole de nou. Please do what you can for me about it and greatly oblige me.

The committee of antiquities of Western India have sent home some fine photographs & money to get out three large works. Mr. James Ferguson has taken one volume, Mr. Hope of the Bombay Civil Service another, and the third upon Beejapoor has been given to me. I have to write a historical sketch and descriptive letterpress, and to get all ready by 1st Feby. which will be sharp work. With my very kind regards to your uncle and many happy returns of the season to you all believe me. Yours very sincerely, Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4216, ff. 1-2]

January 3d 1866

My dear Mr. Blackwood

It is not too late I hope, to wish you and yours a happy New Year, and all prosperity during it. My daughters beg to join with me in the greeting which I hope will find you all well. I got home from London the day before Xmas day and have not been very well since. I think I got a chill at Birmingham where there was a great confusion of trains, and much delay. We were landed on a platform in the centre of the rails and could not get to either side for nearly an hour: & it was very cold & miserable. I hope however I shall be all right soon, but I am not yet able to begin my new work.

This is the writing an historical memoir of the Mahomedan dynasty of Adil Shah in the Deccan, to illustrate a number of fine photographs of the buildings of Beejapoor, which were taken by order of Govt. The work will be a large folio, and it will be printed by Murray for the Society of Antiquities in Bombay. I fancy it is for the most part already suscribed in Bombay by those who have supplied funds for its execution, but some copies will be retained for England. I have to write about 25 ordinary pages, besides descriptions of the buildings.

I have seen no reviews of Ralph yet, and shall be curious to know how it will be reviewed. If you get any will you kindly let me have them if you don't want them. Will the Edinburgh papers notice the book. I hope so. Do you like it yourself? Not so well as Tara perhaps which is the case with my daughters. My father likes it better, and I tell everybody it is the picture of the type of men who went to India, who were neither of very good birth, morals, or education, but who were forced into situations which made them steady.

My best regards to Mr. Wm. and Mr. Simpson, and all good wishes of the season. I suppose the M.S. of the Indian article has not turned up, or it would have been sent.

Believe me

Most sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

24th I am ashamed to find this was never sent to you. Pardon! but I would rather send it, than write another. Have you seen reviews of Ralph in Atheneum, P.M. Gazette. Rather grueling (sic). I am afraid I can't run my ideas in conventional grooves, Spectator review odd, but personally very flattering, and I am wondering what Saturday will say. I hear at the libraries here that the book is more popular than Tara, & I hope this is the case everywhere!

[Ms. 4216, ff. 3-4]

34 Westbourne Place

Eaton Square

25 May [1866]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

As I promised to give you any further information I could obtain on the subject we were speaking of the other day, I wrote to Mr. Robert Morrow of Dublin who is our local "Mudie" and has establishments at Belfast, Cork and other large towns in Ireland. The following is an extract from Mr. Morrows letter of yesterdays

date.

"Referring to your letter of 23d past it is my settled opinion that the circulation of Ralph Darnell has been materially curtailed by the disadvantageous terms upon which Mr. Blackwoods books are supplied to libraries. The net price of his 3 volume novels is 22/6: all the other leading houses supply them at 18/ with a discount of 10 percent. Under these circumstances, of course it is not the interest of librarians to push the circulation of Mr. Blackwoods books.

To speak for myself, I certainly would not purchase as many copies of a book at 22/6 as I would if the same were to be had at 18/- subject to a discount.

In reference to your allusion to the forthcoming book by George Elliot (sic), I am quite satisfied that its circulation will to a certain extent be restricted by the same cause -no matter who the author is, or how popular he might be, such a serious difference of terms would affect the circulation of his book."

I remain etc.

Dr. Robert Morrow

The latter part may be taken ? ?, but I put the question to get an opinion as to whether the great superiority of an author like G.E. would affect the trade aspect of the case which is what concerns you most.

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4216, ff. 12-13]

34 Westbourne Place

Eaton Square

[approx. May 1866]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I am very sorry that I am unable to come to bid you goodbye & my daughters tell me you leave town tomorrow. The attack of fever I have had has been very severe, & has made me very weak & shaky, but I hope I shall soon be right again. We go into Norfolk on Monday & the change of air & quiet will do me good.

When I saw you last I quite forgot to ask you whether the article on the Land Settlement of India which I sent you had ever been found. If it has, will you kindly have it returned to me, as there are several openings for it. I cannot rewrite it, as much of its matter was obtained from unpublished M.S. minutes at the India Office that were lent me, and I could not get them again.

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4216, ff. 5-7]

2d September 1866

My dear Mr. William

Pray accept my best thanks for your letter and the long missing M.S. I was somehow or other convinced it was somewhere, as I told your uncle when I saw him in London, and he said he was so sorry it had been lost -I only hope I may be able to turn it to some account, as I think there is a good deal of misapprehension prevalent about the question of the permanent land settlement of India, a measure

which should not be hurried on, nor made in any case, without the fullest data, and there is a strong party in England which strives to hurry on the Govt. of India to precipitate the settlement in order as it appears to me to invest capital in land, a result which, except in the as yet unpeopled tea districts under the Himalayas I should be sorry to see.

I am grieved about Ralph Darnell very much, and can't understand why it has not succeeded even better than Tara. So many people like and understand it better, and from India I have the same accounts of it as I meet with here. I have many friends who don't flatter me, and in whose judgement I have great reliance. It was a great pity that the lady who reviewed Tara for the Morning Post was absent when Ralph came out. She has been in my council about it from the first, and would have written a far better review than the one there was, I mean she would have understood the subject better.

I heard from a contributor to the Saturday that it would have a very favourable notice in that Growler. But no review ever appeared, for which I have never been able to account. The Athenaeum review was very flattering, and altogether I hoped for the best. Here at all the libraries it is still in great demand for reading, & Mr. Morrow told me only last week that he had not a book of last seasons which had held out nearly so long except Cerise & now Felix Holt.

I have no doubt you have decided right for your own interests in holding on to your old system: but I thought it my duty to bring what Mr. Tinsley, and Mr. Bentley said to your uncles notice, and at his desire I wrote to Mr. Morrow, our head librarian here. I only hope Felix Holt is a marked success, & indeed it is very clever throughout though there are portions I don't like at all.

I am thinking on the subject of 1857, but it is incomparably the most difficult of the series. I cannot begin just yet for I am only just recovered from a bad fever, and the doctor forbids me writing. I was attacked with it in London in the very hot weather, and had a bad relapse at Didlington in Norfolk when we were staying with our cousins the Amhursts. My mouth & throat were sadly affected, and I have had to undergo a series of distressing fever sores which were very painful, & have confined me to the house. But I am thankful to say I am getting quite strong again, and my troubles have nearly disappeared. We hope to go to the Trossachs to the Dunsmures in about a fortnight, and if we can manage it will accompany them home, when I shall hope to see you: a great deal depends upon the weather, which though we have some fine days, is not quite as settled as I could wish.

My young ladies are quite well & desire their kind regards to you & your mother, & believe me

Yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

Many thanks for forwarding the letter to Cadell. I thought he was the eldest son & laird. I can't make out where he is.

[Acc. 5643, vol. D6, n.p.]

Edinburgh

Sept. 20, 1866

My Dear Captain Taylor

I enclose an order for three hundred pounds being the amount payable to you for Ralph Darnell according to our agreement.

The book has most undeservedly been a dead failure qua sale & will

not pay paper and print. It is very provoking but such things will happen & no man can account for them. It is no fault of yours & I have long looked upon it as a past contre temp such as no publisher can avoid meeting with every now & then.

From not hearing from you I suppose you have not been able to make out your proposed Scotch trip. I hope the young ladies are well. My nephew joins me in remembrance

& believe me

always yours truly

(signed) John Blackwood

Capt. Meadows Taylor.

[Ms. 4216, ff. 8-9]

Sept. 21st 1866

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Pray accept my sincere thanks for your note and the order for £300 -to which it gave cover, and for which I am very grateful to you. It has distressed me more than I can tell you that Ralph Darnell has done so badly for both our sakes. I had made so sure that the book would be so much more popular than Tara, and I had done my best to write it well. I cannot account for its failure; but as you say no one can account for such issues, and it is useless to try to trace them. One friend told me in London that if I lived there and belonged to the local literary community I should command success: and that I had too few literary friends! This may be true in its way: but I can't help, either living where I do, or being short of literary allies. I must only do my best, & please God will continue to do so, being conscious of having made many friends and you among the kindest of them.

I wish we could have seen you this year. Our trunks were packed for four days and one day went down to the hall: but a start for the Trossachs was hopeless in a furious gale of wind & rain and so we telegraphed to Mr. Dunsmure that we had given the trip up. On many accounts too, we could hardly have left my father, who would have been entirely alone, and very dreary. We may come over when he goes to Bath, but that is by no means decided.

Have you ever thought of a small edition of Tara -one of the 5f or 6f series? Would it have any chance of success? I ask, because many people both here and in London, said to me they looked for that edition to buy and put in their libraries.

My young ladies join me in kindest regards to Mr. Blackwood & Mr. William & believe me

Always most sincerely yours

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4216, ff. 10-11]

19th October 1866

My dear Mr. Blackwood

It seems almost presumptuous for me to offer you the consideration of any other work, after the unlucky fate of Ralph Darnell, and yet, for many reasons, I would rather that you had the refusal of anything I can do, than otherwise: & with this in my mind, I must tell you what I propose to do, and have it entirely to yourself to approve or otherwise of my intention.

My present plan is to write a series of Tales, illustrative of the great Indian festivals. They will also be illustrative of the people

of the country in various ways: of manners, customs, superstitions and observances, many or most of which could not find place in an ordinary work of fiction. This might be six tales, which would make three volumes, or more if necessary, some Hindu & some Mahomedan.

I have one tale, Hindu, now ready and shall have great pleasure in sending it to you to look over, which would not take you more than two or three hours if so much. It is a legend of Tooljapor the old Tara ground, and is wild enough.

Perhaps, if you approve at all, such a series might answer for the Maga: and perhaps also, you may consider me too ambitious to think of a place there: but be this as it may, I only confide to you what is in my mind and leave it to you to deal with it as you please.

I have not been writing much for a long time, as after that bad fever my doctor forbade any brain work, and I have been amusing myself by painting portraits of my girls. I have nearly finished a large full length portrait of them, and shall work at it as long as the mild weather holds taking, please god, to writing afterwards. With these kindest regards of mine to Mrs. Blackwood believe me

Yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

1868

[Ms. 4241, ff. 1-3]

12 August 1868

My Dear Blackwood,

I have been working on some old papers, and found a M.S. which, written from notes of a days work in my old province, was intended to illustrate my mode of life for my children; to me it reads fresh and graphic, and if you think the subject would suit Maga, I should be so proud to have a place there. It is a Cacherry record of a day with details of cases, and descriptions of characters, and other business Civil, Criminal, and General. I don't think anything of the kind has been written before. The M.S. could be divided into 5 parts of a sheet each, or possibly might be contracted a little; and so I am vain enough to think it would amuse you. I shall be very happy to send it if you wish to see it.

You will have thought me gone out of the world, as I have made no sign: but the fact is that a severe return of my old fever when I saw you last in London returned again when we went to my cousins in Norfolk, and very nearly did for me altogether. I was ill all the autumn and winter, & spring, and in June of last year was sent abroad. Amy had been weakly also, and we went to Hamburg for 3 months. But we were not allowed to return, and were sent to Switzerland from whence the snow drove us early in October to Mentone, where we stayed all the winter and spring I being idle by order -we returned in June, and am thankful to say we are very well, nor have we been at all the worse of the hot weather. I have had a work called the People of India photographs of all the tribes and castes as yet collected, put into my hands by the officials of the India Office and am now working hard at it. Vols. I & II have been published but the literary portion is scant and poor -tis none of mine. Vol. III was partially done and I have finished it since we settled down at home.

We are going to the Dunsmures at the Trossachs next month, and thence to Twizell, so we shall pass through Edinburgh & I hope I

shall see you all flourishing.

Mrs. Blackwood will be sorry to hear that poor old 'Sprig' died a fortnight ago of Bronchitis which has been fatal to many of his kind this year. I must ask her to let me copy the sketch of him which I did for her.

With all our best regards believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

1871

[Ms. 4283, ff. 16-19]

22 July 1871

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have made no sign to you for a long time past: but I was busy with my little history of India -not little indeed after all, and involving much hard labour- and I could not undertake anything else, as all autumn & winter up to May I was in very indifferent health, and ordered to keep very quiet. I had in fact a bad attack of bronchitis which could not be driven out of me in England and it was not till I got home again that I recovered.

I am now thank God quite well, and able to work; and I have put together the sketches of a story of 1857, to complete the series of 57, which was begun with Tara. In the reviews of Ralph Darnell by the Spectator, it was remarked that I might make much more of an Indian lady married to an Englishman than I had of Noor-ool-Nissa and when I was sketching Noor-ool-Nissa, I had thought the same; but the matter required much consideration, and though I had an interesting conversation with Meredith Townsend who is one of the Editors of the Spectator, on the subject soon after I had seen the review, & who urged me to make such a native lady the chief character in a story of the Mutiny. I was not quite prepared with the necessary detail, and had besides, the History to prepare for the Longmans to whom I had promised it.

I could not however help thinking a good deal over the subject, and jotting down material as it came into my mind; and the whole has taken the form in which you will see it. I have given the contents of every chapter of the 3 vols. and the scene is entirely laid in India, with the exception of the close. My own life and my occupations as Commissioner of a large district for many years, enable me to give truthful details of my hero's, and it has been my object to keep in the background as much as possible, the horrors of the Mutiny which are simply shocking, though in many cases highly dramatic.

Savitsee will not be Tara, who was a religious enthusiast for the most part, but an Indian girl full of life and energy, passionate in her love, perhaps capricious and petulant at times, but devoted -even to death. If I can work out the character as I intend it will at all events be new, and I hope interesting.

I will say no more at present but if you like the sketch which I will send you by bookpost, I will write the story for you. I have not written a word of the book yet, indeed it was only yesterday that this sketch was completed.

The dacoity, with which the story opens, was a trial before me, and the evidence of Savitsee, as also the incident of her recognizing

one of the dacoits from his voice, is founded on the evidence of the widow of the person murdered by the dacoits, & one of the most charming native women I ever saw, though I did not marry her!

I shall be glad to hear from you at your entire convenience about the story; and whether you like the sketch or not, please be so kind as return me the M.S. for I have no other complete copy.

With our kind regards to Mrs. Blackwood and Mr. William, believe me my dear Mr. Blackwood

Yours most truly
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4289, ff. 20-21]

16 November [1871]

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Some time in June last, if I remember rightly, I sent for your consideration, the sketch in three parts, of a tale to be called Savitsee to complete the Tara series: but I have not as yet received any communication from you in regard to the proposed book.

I shall take it very kindly of you if you will be so good as put me out of suspense. If you like the tenor of the sketch, I think the finished picture will please you better, and I am ready to write the book for you either in the ordinary form -or any other- or as a serial for "Blackwood" in which I should be proud, once in my life, to have had a place. Indeed the story might have been well nigh finished now, if I had known your wishes at once.

So I again ask you to be so good as decide one way or other, and in doing so you will really much oblige me. -In any case please return me the sketch which will save me the labour of recasting the whole.

I will only add that if, after looking over the M.S. you would like any portion of the story altered, or modified, I shall be most happy to attend to your wishes.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4283, ff. 22-23]

9 December [1871]

My dear Mr. William

It is now four weeks since I last wrote to your Uncle in regard to Savitsee, the third & last of the Tara series, which, in June last I proposed to complete for you -but I have received no reply. I have written to him altogether four times, I think, and I therefore now beg of you the to me great favour of a decision on the subjects of Savitsee, and as early a reply as may suit your convenience.

I fear I may be thought importunate or troublesome in writing again, but the suspense to me is painful and inconvenient, and I think you all know me well enough to be assured I would not unwillingly offend.

And I sometimes think that there may be reasons arising out of your own engagements to have rendered an earlier reply impossible. Should this be still the case I am quite willing to wait your pleasure, though had I heard from you at once, the book might have been completed by this time.

I proposed to your uncle, in my last, to write the story for the

magazine if he liked. In short I left the subject entirely in his hands.

If the book will not suit you, please return me the 3 vol. synopsis, which I sent in June, and of which I have no copy. In any case whether I am to write the book for you or not, please return the M.S. to me. It cost me much thought and labour, and I can do nothing formally without it.

I beg my kind regards to your uncle and also to your mother & sister, & my daughters beg to add their,.

Believe me
yours most truly
Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4283, ff. 24-25]
15 December 1871

My dear Mr. William

I am sincerely obliged by your note, and the M.S. synopsis of Savitsee, which has reached me safely, though I regret very much that it will not have a place by its predecessors in your hands. I was hopeful about it, because I referred the synopsis to my grievieous (sic) critic friends, both reviewers of Tara, and their opinions were most encouraging. One of them indeed to whom I had dictated the synopsis of Tara, liked Savitsee much better. But there is no use saying more on the subjects. I shall write the book, and let it take its chance with "the Publishers".

I am very sorry to hear of your family afflictions and can well understand how much they must have afflicted your uncle. Please tell him with my very kind regards that I had not heard a word of them, and fear he must have thought me a brute for troubling him so much & so often, when his heart was so heavy & sad. I sincerely trust that time has soothed his grief, and that he will be the better of his change to Paris and London, returning to you well and cheery. Will he, and you & your mother & sister accept my sincere Christmas greetings when it comes.

We are much relieved today about the dear Prince. Even Freddys loyalty has been aroused. Oddly enough, I had much the same sort of fear once myself in India & was ? for many days. I believe the first thing I asked for was a glass of beer. The first did not remain, but the second did and I held on; but for more than a month my legs were paralyzed.

Believe me
yours very sincerely
Meadows Taylor

1872

[Ms. 4298, f. 11]
31 January 1872

Dear Sirs,

I shall be very much obliged if you will kindly inform me in what relations we stand in regard to the copyright of Tara, and Ralph Darnell -I can find no memorandum on the subjects among my papers, and the letters to me of your Mr. John Blackwood, were to my great regret, burned in the fire which occurred in this house in 1869.

I remain, dear sirs, yours very faithfully, Meadows Taylor

[Acc. 5643, Vol. D8, p. 121-122]

45 George Street

Edinburgh

March 27, 1872

My Dear Colonel Taylor

We owe you many apologies for not having sooner replied to your letter of Jan. 31st but at the time it came my Uncle was laid up and unable for work and since I too have been unwell so our correspondence has consequently been sadly neglected. I enclose you copy of my Uncle's letter in which the terms for Tara are stated but I cannot find any copy of the one for Ralph Darnell. However from the amount paid to you for it I think it must have been very similar. We only bought the edition we printed & the copyright of the work is still your property.

Both works deserved a greater success than they got but the scenes & pictures of life they described were too strange & unfamiliar to interest the general public and so cause a demand on the libraries as no one now ever dreams of buying a 3 vol. novel.

I hope you and your daughters have weathered out this trying winter well, and are in good health. There has been great sickness here & everyone almost has been ill more or less, but our circle are more nearly sound again. My uncle joins me in kind regards and believe me

always yours truly

(signed) William Blackwood

P.S. Understand that you are welcome to do whatever you like with both works as the sale with us is virtually quite over.

[Ms. 4298, f. 13]

30 March 1872

My dear Mr. William,

Pray accept my best thanks for your letter enclosing a copy of your kindly letter to me about Tara, and informing me that I was free to act in regard to the two books as might be necessary. I had preserved all the correspondence carefully, but it was burnt in the fire in my house with many other papers, and as the firm who will, I hope, publish the two books, proposed a republication of all that I have yet written from the Thug downwards, I was obliged to ascertain as what conditions the copyrights were. Mr. Bentley very kindly gave up to me his half share in the copyright of the Thug so that all are now free.

I don't in the least know whether what has been suggested to me will come to anything. It is simply a matter for further arrangements, and I suspect very much depends upon whether the book I am now writing, proves to be successful or not. If it should be, I shall do very well. If not I suppose I may make my bow to the public and retire. I shall never however forget the kind interest your uncle and yourself took in me and in my books, and for his giving me another chance with the public and the critics, by whom I daresay I had been forgotten.

I am sure you will regret to hear that my daughter Amy has been (Wednesday) attacked by one of the prevailing epidemics. We had been staying a few days with Ld. James & Lady Rachel Butler, and Amy was not well there. We returned yesterday and last night an erupt(ure/ion) came out which has not declared itself and my doctor is anxious as it may be smallpox. You may imagine therefore how

anxious her sister and I are, & this must be my excuse for a hurried letter. With all our kind regards to your Uncle and yourself.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

I am charmed with Madame ? Who is not?

[Ms. 4298, f. 15]

(1872)

My dear Mr. William Blackwood,

I was examining some old papers a few days ago and met with an old M.S. which I sent from India a good many years ago to my daughters by ways of showing them what I did in my camp and how I did it. I took notes for one day of all that happened and wrote them out.

On reading them again I liked them, and as there are now & then Indian subjects in Blackwoods perhaps this sketch of a days proceedings would answer your uncles purpose. I don't like to bother him, but if he would like to look over the M.S. I would send it. - That is if it would be returned if not wanted and I think you would do this for me.

My new story will be ready about the end of Sept. I am now correcting proofs of Vol. III. I am very sorry that you have not got it, for I think it will make more impression than even Tara.

With my best regards believe me

yours sincerely

Meadows Taylor

1873

[Ms. 4312, f. 11]

17 February (1873)

My dear Mr. Blackwood

My new book Seeta is so favourably reviewed, that I am not ashamed of asking you to be so kind as accept a copy in memory of your many kindnesses. I have asked Mister Henry S. King & Co. the publishers, to forward a copy to you and hope you will receive it safely, as also that it may interest you, at least in some of the characters.

I am glad also to tell you that King & Co. are going to republish the whole of my works commencing with the Thug which you remember.

With my kind regards to Mrs. Blackwood and Mr. William

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4312, f. 13]

29 June 1873

My dear Mr. Blackwood

You and Mrs. Blackwood have always taken so kind an interest in my daughters, that I think it will please you to hear that the youngest Amy, is going to be married, on the 10th July, to a Mr. Krohn who is going to India in good employment under HH the Nizams government. The bridegroom elect is an M.A. of Magdalene Coll., Cambridge and a very nice fellow indeed, in all respects, and with a fair start in life Amy has, I hope every chance of future happiness. A warm climate has always been declared necessary for her by the doctors,

and Hyderabad where she will live is temperately warm and for the most part of the year very agreeable. And Amy has near relatives, my wifes brothers, cousins, etc. living there, who will be able to help her a great deal in many ways. -So, though we shall feel her loss very sorely, it is, on the whole a very assuring prospect, and I am sure you will wish them good luck!

Please tell Mr. William of this; I did not know it myself when I saw him in London, nor did I ever suspect it or I would have told you.

Believe me

yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

1875

[Ms. 4339, ff. 117-120]

23d January 1875

My dear Mr. Blackwood

The sight of your handwriting once more, and the contents of your kind note was most refreshing to me this morning, and I will reply at once to your query as well as I can.

In order to enable you to judge of what my memoirs are, I think it will be the best plan to send you the first volume of the manuscript, which I will do on Monday if possible. You will then be able to judge whether passages can be extracted from it to form the "excerpts" you allude to for separate serial publication, or whether the entire publication will not be most advisable in many respects. Most respects perhaps the second volume, I think would be found more interesting than the first and if you desire to see that also, it could follow at a posts notice.

It is right I should tell you the little history of the book which is this -when Mess. Henry S. King & Co. had published Seeta for me, Mr. King proposed I should do something more; and himself suggested these memoirs of my life. Now my cousin H. Reeve and others, especially my daughters, & some literary friends had, for some years, been pressing me to write "The Story of My Life" and I was not disinclined to do so, especially as Mr. King proposed the most liberal consideration. I had the amplest materials for it, because every letter I had written home from India from the year I went out, 1824, had been preserved by my father. I therefore told Mr. King that I could write it, but should expect a long price for it, and I had been advised to ask at least a thousand pounds for it.

When the M.S. was completed, I pressed for some definite arrangement before publication, and he offered me one hundred and fifty pounds for the first edition, and ten shillings royalty on the sale of all succeeding copies. These terms I declined, and put the M.S. aside for further consideration. It occurred to me however one day, that you might like to hear of the book and I wrote accordingly.

I confess I should not like to have the book injured for future publication, even after my death, by the extraction of separate scenes from it and then publication as a serial form. Again, it may be said, such a publication might prove a means of attraction to the main book if it were published afterwards. I cannot take upon me to judge of this matter.

Again, the book is as it were -run together: the incidents follow

the story in rather ? of it, and I do not see how they could well be separated without injury, while I should mistrust my own judgement extremely in dealing with them. To my perception the whole "Story of My Life" is so full of incident, and description, that it would not flag as a serial in "Blackwood" or any other serial publication and might be published afterwards but I may be wrong, and too ambitious perhaps and your judgement will be calmer and more critical. You will find no attempts at fine writing, I have followed the simplicity of Defoe as much as I possibly could.

Forgive this long history, but I thought I had better explain to you fully how the beginning of the book came about.

I have not been lucky this winter, or is it that getting older makes me more liable to illness. I am thank God convalescent now, and have just eaten a mutton chop for my lunch and drunk your health in a glass of champagne; but I have had bad bronchitis, since the day after Christmas day, till the day before yesterday, and have for the most part been confined to my bed. Part of the time the disease was very severe and serious, and poor Alice wearied with watching, broke down too and had to take to her bed, with cold & fever, so that we are both weak enough & very valiant as long as we sit in long arm chairs, but good for little enough when we get up to walk. We are however convalescent, and we both slept well last night. The doctor says we shall do, at last and chops and champagne are not a bad sign. Accept my best wishes of the New Year and pray give my best regards to Mr. William.

We had excellent news from Amy last Sunday. She was very well and her child, a girl, is (of course) the most beautiful baby that ever was seen.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Meadows Taylor

John Blackwood Esq.

[Ms. 4339, ff. 121-122]

July 27th 1875

My dear Mr. Blackwood

You will be sorry to hear that I am obliged to employ my daughter as amanuensis -but I have lost the use of my eyes, as far as writing and reading is concerned for the last two or three months. I have just returned from London where I went, in the hope of getting some relief. I was told both here and there that the affliction of my eyes is the result of continued ill health and that I must look for restoration to health before I can hope for improvement in sight. I hoped to meet you in London and to explain all this -but the first day I was able to go to your office, I heard you had left the night before which I was very sorry for. I would have come sooner but was suffering too much from the effects of a fall down some steps.

Several months ago I sent you the M.S. of the first Vol. of my memoirs for consideration and I can send you the second now if you wish it. In any case, however they could not be used now, as I am advised by Sir Wm. Jenner and the oculist also, Dr. Liebreich, to spend this winter abroad, and India is recommended, for my general health. We, that is my daughter and I purpose to leave Liverpool in Sept. and while I am absent in India, which will be till the spring, both vols. of M.S. could remain with you to be looked over at your leisure. Please let me know whether you would like me to send Vol.

II.

Remember us please very kindly to Mrs. Blackwood & your nephew & believe me

Yours very sincerely

Alice M. Taylor

for

Meadows Taylor

[Ms. 4339, ff. 123-124]

[1875] (Sept. 11th)

My dear Mr. Blackwood

I have today sent by 'Globe Express' the 2nd vol. of my memoirs. Please keep it as you suggest. It requires rereading and I daresay a good deal of alteration with some additions and condensing since I finished it. I have had no time for revising it, as I began a new book directly I had finished it and could not attend to it. The corrections can easily be made, and the work carried down to my period of loss of sight: if it meets your approval. We leave home tomorrow evening for Liverpool & sail on Tuesday morning. My daughter and I join in sincere good wishes for yourself & Mrs. Blackwood and thanks for your kind wishes for us and for Amy.

Believe me

yours very sincerely/ A. Taylor for Meadows Taylor

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